

"THE BRAIN" — NEW WALTER TYRER STORY — WITHIN

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1066

An illustration depicting a crime scene investigation. On the left, a man in a light-colored coat is bent over, examining a body on the ground. In the center, a large, dark, cylindrical object, possibly a barrel or a piece of machinery, lies on its side. To the right, a man in a dark coat and a fedora hat stands looking towards the scene. The background is dark and smoky, suggesting a chaotic or dangerous environment. The large number '1066' is superimposed over the right side of the illustration.

## ROUGH HOUSE

A NORMAN CONQUEST STORY  
BY BERKELEY GRAY

# ROUGH HOUSE



*He was warned .... by Conquest. He took no notice until Rubber Face came.*

*Then, it was TOO LATE!*

## Chapter 1.

### THE MAN WHO LIKED SPINACH

**M**R. THEODORE SMYTH, M.P., stood in front of the mirror in his study at Bishop's Weald and gave a passable impression of a Napoleon. He held his fat and pompous figure very upright, and postured with self-important arrogance. He even made grimaces at himself, and stood the strain gamely. Looking at his reflection in the mirror must have been an ordeal at the best of times.

"Ha!" he said with intense satisfaction. "Hem! Capital!"

Mr. Smyth was evidently a man who was very easily pleased. He stood sideways with his shoulder to the mirror and took another look. No doubt about it, he possessed a lovely bearing. More pleased than ever, he dragged himself away from his reflection and strolled to the open french windows. Well, it wasn't so much a stroll as a strut. Having arrived, he looked out into the dusk over the mathematically arranged and spotless gardens, and frowned. Until yesterday he had regarded Bishop's Weald as the apple of his eye, but this evening he realised that it wasn't much of a place, after all. Not in the same street as Chisdon Park.

Bishop's Weald was more or less his own creation. He had bought the old Essex property many years earlier, against all the wishes of his town-loving wife, and he had made so many alterations and additions to the once-mellow old house that the original structure was scarcely recognisable. He had laid out the gardens with geometrical exactitude, in conformity with the workings of his businesslike mind. If a daisy on one of the lawns chanced to come out for a bit of sun during Mr. Smyth's absence, it would instinctively curl up and hide on his approach.

There was a good deal of land attached to the Bishop's Weald property, and most of this land was devoted to the high-pressure production of spinach, and this wretched vegetable, having grown to maturity, was thereupon gathered in vast quantities and shot into Mr. Smyth's canning factory—mercifully hidden from the house by the undulating downs. Mr. Smyth had made a lot of money out of his spinach, and he professed to like the stuff. Plenty of other people liked it, too, apparently, for "Smyth's Succulent Spinach" was a best seller in the canned vegetable line.

With the passing of years, Mr. Smyth

had blossomed out into a self-made country squire. He had been able to send his two sons to the famous Public school of St. Frank's, and later to Oxford, his wife, having suffered the soul-stifling effects of a machine-made life, in which her husband ordered her every trifling movement, had finally thrown in the sponge and died. Roderick and Hilary had been motherless for over five years.

Mr. Smyth's frown deepened. In the gathering dusk he beheld a weedy figure in white flannels cutting across the corner of the bottom lawn. His elder son Roderick had been giving him a lot of trouble, the last young bound! Roderick would have new responsibilities from now on!

This thought, while giving rise to fresh problems, was nevertheless a highly satisfying thought. It reminded Mr. Smyth that his elder brother had unexpectedly died, and that he was now the twelfth Earl of Chisdon, lord of all the rolling Chisdon estates in Kent, including the considerable rent-roll. A bit of a shock, the eccentric Richard pegging out so suddenly, when everybody in the family had given him another forty years, but it was the foolish man's own fault for neglecting

# A BRILLIANT, LONG, COMPLETE STORY OF NORMAN CONQUEST AND PIXIE EVERARD

By **BERKELEY** Gray

a simple leg-out, sustained in a trifling fall from his horse. Mr. Smyth stifled. No such fate could ever befall him. If he so much as scratched his finger, he had the family doctor rallying round in less than half an hour.

Yes, he would have to give Roderick a good talking to. The fellow was nothing but a slacker. No good in the office, no good anywhere. All he thought of was tennis in the summer and Ringer in the winter. And one day he would be Earl of Chalcot.

Roderick, unconscious of his father's unkindly meditations, ambled through the open front doorway and found Travers, the butler, on the spacious oak-carpeted hall.

"Ouv'r nowhere about?" he asked, as he tossed his tennis racket into a chair.

"His lordship is in the study, sir," said Travers, gliding forward to retrieve the carelessly flung racket. "I think you know, Mr. Roderick, that his lordship is always in the study at this hour of the evening." Roderick grinned rather fatuously.

"Okay, Travers, old boy! I only wanted to hear you trot out that 'his lordship' stuff," he explained. "It gets me every time. You're much better than you were this afternoon."

He glouched off to the study and found that his father had just turned the lights on.

"Isn't it a bit thick, guv'nor?" he said protestingly, "getting the huffy servants to call you 'lordship'? Dammit, Uncle Richard's hardly said 'I haven't met until to-morrow. Might at least have waited until he was buried—'"

"Don't be ridiculous, Roderick," interrupted his father sharply. "I am the Earl of Chalcot, am I not? The moment your uncle died I succeeded to the title—since he was childless, and I am the next in the line of succession. Naturally, I am not formally assuming my title until—er—after the funeral. I cannot help what the servants do."

"No, I suppose not," murmured Roderick, with a covert grin. "When's Hilary coming down from London? This evening? He was frantically excited when I spoke to him over the phone this morning. I mean, all this makes a difference—what?—You can't get away with it, guv'nor, it's a precious piece of luck!"

"There is no need, Roderick, to be so colloquial about your uncle's death!"

"Come off it, guv!" protested the young man. "I only saw Uncle Richard once in my life, and that was when I was seven. He never cured lupus about any of us, and I don't see why we should shed crocodile tears because he's pegged out. You often told me there was no reasonable chance of our branch of the family ever getting our hooks into the title. With Uncle Richard hale and hearty, and on the right side of middle age—Well, I mean, always the chance that he'd marry and have kids of his own—"

"This discussion, Roderick, has most of your discussion, is merely idle," interrupted Mr. Smyth impatiently. "Go and get into some manly clothing and then take the car and meet your brother at the station. He's coming by the evening train." Roderick ambled out, slugging, and nearly collided with Travers in the doorway.

"A gentleman to see your lordship," said Travers, who was looking slightly flustered.

"He insists that his name is Mr. Norman Conquest, sir—er—our lord! I asked him for a card, but he informed me that the only cards on his person at the moment bear the names of several justices of the peace and a magistrate. A strange young gentleman, my lord!"

"A lunatic, I should think!" frowncd the master of Halltop's World. "Conquest? Did you say Conquest? Norman Conquest? Good heavens! I wonder if he's the impudent rascal I believe he is? What would a man of his stamp want in this house?"

"Not your valuables, Brother Theodore," came a drawing voice from behind Travers. "Move aside, sir, and then beat it!"

There was something irresistible in the tall, lithe young man who entered. He took Travers gently by the shoulders, propelled him out of the room, and shut the door. Then he faced about, took a couple of strides forward, and seated himself easily on a corner of the big mahogany desk.

"I just dropped in, Brother Theodore, to collect a little information—and perhaps to put you wise to a spot of danger that's likely to crop up," said the Oxy Despatcher, proffering his cigarette-case. "No?" He lit one himself and cocked it at an acute angle in his mouth. "What, if anything, do you know of your late brother's life in Australia?"

"Well, upon my soul!" Mr. Smyth fairly

goggled, and he swelled inches in every direction. "Of all the infernal impertinence! Are you aware, sir, that you are sitting on my desk?" He fairly spluttered. "As for my brother's life in Australia, I only know that he spent a few years there in his early manhood. Not that I can see that it is any business of yours!"

"Patience, brother—patience," said Norman Conquest, making himself more comfortable. "Perhaps you have heard the name of Rafael Cuffe, Miles Murchison, and Crochester Day?"

Mr. Smyth was so startled that he forgot the angry sentence of dismissal which had been on the tip of his tongue.

"Cuffe—yes!" he said sharply. "Wasn't Rafael Cuffe murdered outside a London restaurant last night, or the night before? And there's a report that Murchison and Day, who witnessed that crime, have mysteriously disappeared!" He took a step nearer to his visitor, his fat, florid face aflame with inquiry. "Why do you ask me such questions, young man?"

"Because I've every reason to believe that these three blighters, now dead—yes, they're all dead—had been steadily blackmailing the late Earl of Chalcot for twenty-five years."

Mr. Theodore Smyth suddenly sat down. He forgot all his anger. Norman Conquest's unique methods were strikingly effective. Premises were dispensed with at a stroke, and no man in England was a greater stickler for formalities than Mr. Theodore Smyth.

"Blackmailing my brother!" he ejaculated. "Ridiculous! Preposterous! My brother lived the life of a recluse. Cuffe and these other men were denizens of London's Bohemia—theatrical people and such like. My brother and they lived in worlds apart. You're talking sheer nonsense!"

"You think so?" drawled Norman, a grim note creeping into his voice. "Listen, brother. The Earl of Chalcot dies in the early evening, and that same night Rafael Cuffe is murdered! It's a special night for Cuffe and his pals—a twenty-fifth annual celebration dinner. That annual dinner, I believe, was to celebrate the original year of the squeeze."

"Of the what?"

"The Blackmail."

"In all my life," said Mr. Smyth, his colour purple. "I have never heard such a tangle of scandalous rubbish as that!" He rose majestically to his feet. "How dare you?"

"How dare I what?" asked Norman, in surprise.

"How dare you make these vile suggestions? Mr. Smyth, now thoroughly enraged, had lost control of his voice, and his words boomed out loudly. "Blackmailing a man implies that he holds a guilty and disgraceful secret—"

"Not always—"

"Always!" thundered Mr. Smyth imperiously. "No man would pay blackmail for twenty-five years unless his secret was as shady as hell itself. And you dare to sit there and tell me that my brother, the late Earl of Chalcot—"

"I wonder," said Norman mildly, "what it feels like to burst a blood vessel?" He eyed his host's ample figure speculatively. "In your case, I suspect, pretty painful—to say nothing of being messy!"

Mr. Theodore Smyth regained some measure of control.

"You had better go, young man," he said

thickly. "You had better go before I call my servants to have you thrown out."

"That's no way to talk to a man who has come here to do you a good turn," retorted Norman, sliding easily from the desk and pushing Mr. Smyth back into his chair. "There's a queer rock formation at Chelston Park known as Roger's Peak, and on the very summit of this, marked by an interior lift, is an observatory built by your brother. Correct?"

"Yes, quite correct; but I don't see—"

"The steward of this cycle is an Australian aboriginal called Toowoomba Dick, and imported by Lord Chelston in his early boyhood," continued the Trouble Hunter, lighting a fresh cigarette. "Now, don't go off the deep end again, Popeye!"

"Popeye!" belittled Mr. Smyth.

"Aren't you fond of spinach?"

"Of all the insistent young dogs—"

"Let it go!" said Norman with a wave of his hand. "Forget the spinach. Now, it's my theory that the black bloke, Toowoomba Dick, murdered Rafael Caffé—"

"What!"

"And the point is this: What is the tie—"

"I don't want to hear any of your crazy theories, Mr. Conquest!" interrupted the other dangerously. "The very suggestion that this faithful black servant should have gone to London and killed a man is too ludicrous for serious discussion."

"On the face of it, yes," agreed Norman Conquest, his quartz-grey eyes glinting oddly. "But later, Mr. Smyth! I was on the scene a few seconds after Caffé was murdered. I chased the murderer and actually caught him. He was far too agile and slippery to be an ordinary white man, and he wore a rubber mask which completely concealed his features. He could have been a black man."

"Tchah!" exploded the Spinach King.

"I know, in fact, that he was Toowoomba Dick," continued the Desperado easily. "Better hold tight to your chair, brother, because I'm now going to give you an earful. Marchion and Day disappeared this afternoon. I was in Marchion's flat when they were kidnapped and taken away. I raced down to Chelston Park and somehow—never mind how—I got up to Roger's Peak. In a dark chamber I found six waxwork figures, in addition to the body of Rafael Caffé."

"Go on!" said Mr. Smyth emphatically.

"The waxwork figures represented Caffé, Marchion, Day, yourself, and your two sons."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes, it's a nasty one," admitted Norman. "But more of this presently. Toowoomba Dick snatched me at the top of the peak, and we had a bit of a scrap. I got away, and I found the bodies of Marchion and Day in a neighbouring wood."

"This time Mr. Smyth merely made gasping noises."

"Barred in a shallow pit, covered with dead leaves—placed there temporarily," said Norman Conquest tersely, his every word fringed. "Placed there until they could be carried up to the peak under the cover of darkness. Incidentally, I carried those bodies to Scotland Yard. You see, Mr. Smyth, I know that Toowoomba Dick did these three killings. And I'm asking you—why?"

"You're asking me!" gasped the other.

"As Lord Chelston's nearest relative, yes," retorted Norman swiftly. "What is the enormously strong tie which existed between your brother and Toowoomba Dick which urged the black steward to kill his master's enemies after his master's

death? Why not before? Why not years ago? That's the middle. There's one answer, of course. Lord Chelston was too fine a man to countenance any violence, and Toowoomba Dick knew it. The shock of your brother's death affected the blackie in a queer way, and he went berserk. But it's not good enough, Mr. Smyth. It doesn't explain why you and your sons are on the death list."

"The—death list!" stammered Mr. Smyth.

"What else? Six waxwork figures—yes, and a chunk of wax on a seventh stand, probably reserved for me," said the Desperado. "I'm here, Mr. Smyth, because you're the one man who might be able to help me. This thing is serious. It's packed with high voltage danger. Three men are dead. You are next! I'm trying to warn you." Lord Chelston. Don't forget, you are Lord Chelston now. I'm here to help you, but I can't help you unless you help me. You've got to tell me everything you know about your brother's early life in Australia—"

"Stop!"

"Now, don't go haywire again—"

"Damn you, stop!" thundered Mr. Theodore Smyth, his whole pompous person bristling with outraged indignation.

"I have heard more than enough, Conquest! I know something of your reputation, and I know that you are a barefaced adventurer, quick to seize upon any chance of making easy money."

"Up to a point, true," admitted Norman readily. "But at the moment I'm thinking only of preserving your life. Not," he added reflectively, "that I can see any particular reason why it should be preserved! Frankly, Mr. Smyth—or Lord Chelston—I don't like you. You're too big and important to learn anything, aren't you? You know all the answers."

"I know that you have got hold of some ridiculous fable about my family, and that you have invented this tissue of nonsense in order to frighten me!" shouted the other furiously. "A pretty game, Conquest! You'd like me to buy your silence, eh? And you're clever enough to tell your words in a cloud of meaningless rigmarole, so that I shall find it difficult to bring any charge against you." He laughed scornfully, his fat and majestic figure quivering with arrogance and fury. "You've picked a loser this time, Conquest. I'm too clever for you!"

"Too clever! Good heavens!" Norman sprang to his feet like something made of spring steel and grasped his host by the shoulders. "Listen, mug! Your life's in danger! Unless you heed my warning, you're likely to be dead before midnight—to-morrow. I fancy Toowoomba Dick is too busy this evening—"

"Take your hands off me, you impudent rogue!" shouted Mr. Smyth. "Travers!"

He went suddenly frantic. "Walker! George! Come in here at once! Travers!"

There was no need to ring. Various members of the household had heard the fierce altercation in the library, and Travers had apparently been outside the door. For the door opened at once, and the butler stood there, frightened-looking.

"Shall—shall I call Mr. Roderick?" he faltered.

"No, and I don't think he has heard—"

"Never mind Mr. Roderick!" snapped Mr. Smyth. "Get George and Walter, and throw this impudent young hound out of the house!"

George and Walter were two men-servants of such weedy physique that Norman Conquest laughed scornfully when they appeared and advanced upon him.

"Apparently you don't feed spinach to your household staff, Brother Theodore," said the Desperado, seeing George with one hand and balancing him by the collar on to a picture-book. "You didn't expect these weaklings to chuck me out, did you?" He tossed Walter on to the desk and strode for the door. "Better watch out that your next visitor isn't the undertaker!"

"You heard him!" screamed Mr. Smyth shrilly. "That was a threat—a direct threat of murder!"

"Your mistake, Popeye!" retorted Norman. "It was just a warning for you to surround yourself with bodyguards—and I mean bodyguards!"

He took long strides through the hall and down the drive in the dusk. Joy Everard, his game little partner, was waiting in the sleek Hispano.

"Well!" she murmured. "You don't look very pleased."

"No wonder Brother Theodore has his sting in the waxwork show," said Norman Conquest, almost sarcastically. "Our pet, Toowoomba Dick, is evidently a bloke who knows his onions!"

#### TOOWOOMBA DICK'S SECRET.

ROGER'S PEAK, so called because one Sir Roger Smyth, centuries earlier, had climbed to the top of the rock promontory and flung himself to his death, stood silent and dark in the purple gloom of the evening. Chelston Manor, only a short distance away beyond the lawn and gardens, was a house of drawn blinds and whispering gloom, for its late master lay in his coffin in the little private chapel.

Since Lord Chelston's death no members of the household staff had disturbed the tragic sorrow of Toowoomba Dick, the dumb black steward of the late earl's strange retreat. Mr. Pritchard, the family lawyer, had seen Toowoomba Dick only twice. And Mr. Pritchard, after that visit, had quietly advised Bentley, the butler, to leave Toowoomba Dick severely to himself.

"The poor fellow is quite broken up," Mr. Pritchard had said, with a sad shake of his head. "The unexpectedness of his lordship's death hit him with a tremendous shock. A nasty business, Bentley, and so tragically unnecessary. No healthier man than Lord Chelston ever lived. In his prime, too! And all because of a neglected first wound!"

Toowoomba Dick did not look particularly grief-stricken as he emerged from a doorway directly opposite the lift, at the top of the great peak. A single electric light, hanging from the centre of the lobby, glowed upon the black man's shirt-sleeved figure. His sleeves were rolled up past the elbows, and his hands were strangely soiled with coloured wax. And in Toowoomba Dick's eyes there was a look of almost ghastly satisfaction.

From the lobby there were two staircases, opposite one another, both leading up to the building proper. A building of grey stone perched on the very summit of the rock peak, its walls flush with the sheer precipitous sides of the pinnacle.

Toowoomba Dick went to the well-equipped bathroom and removed all traces of the wax from his hands and arms. Then he donned his jacket, switched off the lights, and made the long descent swiftly in the lift. Complete darkness had just enveloped the peaceful Kent countryside, and the route which Toowoomba Dick took was in any case lonely and private. The grounds immediately behind the rock pinnacle were broken into fern-choked gullies

and small wooded hills. There was a narrow driveway running tortuously through this part of the property, and ultimately joining up with a quiet and little-used road. This back-drive, so to speak, was never used by any of the people whose business took them to Chastlen Manor. The gate at the end, indeed, was invariably kept padlocked.

The black figure progressed so noiselessly, so fittingly, that he might have been a passing shadow. Brought up since boyhood in the confined limits of Roger's Peak, he nevertheless possessed all the remarkable qualities of the true black tracker of Australia. It was instinctive in him, a heritage from his savage ancestors.

At a certain point in the drive he plunged into the dense trees of a wood, a wood which came crowding down a hillside. There was no path, no track of any kind, and the darkness under the thick foliage was like that of a tomb. Yet never once did Toowoomba Dick falter or hesitate. He walked as though his trail was marked out with blazing torchlights.

A climb of several hundred feet, and he reached more level ground, with his feet sinking into the spongy leafmould of countless ferns. Some little distance farther along, when he appeared to be in the very centre of the wood, the trees thinned out somewhat, leaving a kind of clearing. Yet the overhead branches met in one continuous canopy still, so that no twinkling of starlight could penetrate to the ground.

The black figure came to a halt. He stood with his muscles tensed and his nostrils twitching. He was like some wild creature of a primordial forest. He started moving again, swerving away to the left, and then halting abruptly.

"You have been waiting long, my good Crenson?" he murmured, in a soft, cultured voice.

"Hell!" came a hoarse whisper from the darkness. "You ain't human, pal! How'd I know just where I was? You pretty near scared the lights outa me! I only been here a minute, and I didn't hear nuthin'!"

"Which is good, my friend," said Toowoomba Dick softly. "Come, we have work to do."

"Ya mean—them stuffs?" said the other man huskily. "They ain't been here all the time, have they? If I'd known, I'd of had the willies a damned sight worse."

"For your help at the recent extermination of certain human rats I have paid you well," murmured Toowoomba Dick. "I do not pay you, Crenson, in suffer from the willies. This work must be done, and I need your help."

Crenson gulped. He could never get over the incongruity of that beautiful voice, so rich in cadences, emanating from such murderous lips. He stifled his fears. Never in his life had he earned such easy money as he was earning now.

"Ya mean, we're gonna carry the stuffs to your sky-perch?" he breathed. "Listen, pal, you're crazy! I don't get it at all! Even supposing we make the cliff drive safely, what then? You're taking an awful chance—"

"Hush," interrupted the cultured voice. "Yes, this is the spot. Help me to remove the leaves—"

Tod Crenson, as cold-blooded a gunman as ever pecked a gun, felt his flesh beginning to creep. Most of his work had been done in a high-speed car—in the streets of Chicago and New York, and other American cities; a sudden blast of death for the man "on the spot" and a lightning getaway. The present racket was not so his line, and he knew little or nothing

about his employer. But the money was the sweetest ever.

On the one or two brief occasions when he had seen his principal's face, that face had been entirely covered by a rubber mask. He had "snatched" the body of Rafael Caffe from the mortuary—a simple enough task, for the mortuary had been unguarded—and had taken it by car to the cliff door at the foot of Roger's Peak. Even then, however, his knowledge of his employer and of his surroundings had been scanty. And this present body-hunting in a dark Kentish wood gave him gooseflesh all over.

A sudden snarling, animal-like cry caused him to stiffen as though paralyzed. His head whipped instinctively for his gun-holster. The darkness was answering him.

"Come!" came the savage voice of Toowoomba Dick, so unlike his usual tones. "The bodies of Murchison and Day have



gone! Nothing here but leaves—dead leaves—"

"Holy cat!" gurgled Crenson, looking wildly round him into the pitchy blackness. "Ya mean somebody's beat us to it? The cops! Hell! We gotta take a powder—"

"Calm yourself, my friend," interrupted Toowoomba Dick, the thing's panic receding on his own balance. "There is only one man responsible for the taking of the bodies—Norman Conquest!"

Tod Crenson sweated.

"And ya tell me to be calm?" he croaked. "Say, that Conquest bird is poison. But how's know—"

"You had an opportunity of killing Conquest when you emitted Murchison and Day away from London," broke in the other. "Later, Conquest came down here. After we parted this afternoon, I surprised him in the peak-house. And that girl of his was waiting on the drive. Yes, Conquest is the only man who could have done this thing."

"Yeah, and by now he's spliced everything to the cops!"

"If Conquest had informed the police, the police would have been here, in this wood," said Toowoomba Dick steadily.

"They would have visited me at the peak. Oh, no, Crenson! It is a possibility, of Conquest that he always works alone. We must deal with him—at once. He is our greatest danger. Come!"

The frightened gunman felt a guiding hand on his arm. He blundered helplessly through the wood, and no further word was spoken. At last they plunged down a steep slope and reached an open pathway. After the stygian blackness of the wood, it was like coming out into the daylight.

"What is this joint, anyway?" muttered Crenson uneasily. "Ya never told me, pal. All I know is that it's a swell estate near the village of Chastlen Park—"

"We are in Chastlen Park, the ancestral estate of the earls of Chastlen," said Toowoomba Dick, his voice soft and melodious. "I have other things to tell you. But have patience for a few minutes. It is not wise to talk here."

They walked on, and soon came to a

"I'm here to warn you," said Conquest, "that you are next on the death list!"

short cliff which rose from the side of the drive. There was a deeply recessed door. A key clicked in the lock. Crenson walked through into a strange kind of subway, where little electric lights were glowing at intervals. A startled cry was in his throat as his companion closed the door.

"Hell!" Crenson was staring dazedly at Toowoomba Dick's face, which was masked in his rubber mask. "Say, I never knew—That killer of yours, pal!"

"On on—say it!" murmured the other calmly. "The face of an aboriginal savage, yes? A black man—a hideous sight, less prepossessing, even, than the rubber mask."

"Gee, buddy, I never guessed you was a nig— I mean, a coloured girl!" Crenson corrected himself hastily. "With you wearing that rubber mask, and speaking so swell, and coming from such a swell country estate—why, I always figured that you was some high-hat blue-blood who wanted to keep—to keep—"

"My identity quiet?" said Toowoomba Dick helpfully. "Exactly, my good Crenson. You are much nearer the mark than you suppose. I have decided to take you

into my complete confidence, for the simple reason that I have no alternative. I must have your continued help. Come!"

They walked along the subway tunnel and arrived at a small self-operated lift. Cranston clutched his stomach and turned green as the little elevator went shooting upwards at high speed.

"Good grief! Like we was in the Empire State Building!" he purred. "These lousy things always play hell with my guts! When are we gonna stop?"

Toowomba Dick eyed him anxiously. "Even the strongest of us have our weak spots, eh?" he remarked. "You must be a very bad sailor, my friend."

Cranston reeled out of the lift with relief when they reached the top. He opened his eyes wide after they had negotiated the short staircase to the big lounge, with its soft contoured lighting and its many evidences of refinement and luxury. It was no mere temporary retreat, to be used in odd moments of relaxation, but a place of comfort, of homely charm—the abode of a man of cultured intelligence.

"Huh!" said Cranston. "Some dump!" "My only excuse, unless boyhood," replied Toowomba Dick, as he poured two whiskies and splashed and stirred them. "Drink, my friend. You look as though you need it. Yes, my father, Lord Chalcot, who has just died, built this place—"

He was interrupted by a gulping gurgle from Cranston as the latter swallowed some of his drink the wrong way.

"Your—father?" "Yes, Lord Chalcot was my father," "Stop ya kidding, pal!" begged Tod, as he dropped into a chair. "I figure you mean he was like a father to ya?"

"I mean, my friend, that I am the twelfth Earl of Chalcot," said Dick deliberately. "An aristocratic English peer with the face and skin of a black savage!" He laughed softly. "A strange and terrible combination, eh? He tapped his chest with both clenched fists. "But inside here I am of the same blood as my father, with the same genetic nature."

"Oh, yeah!" said Cranston dizzily. "The men I have killed deserved worse than death," muttered Dick. "Vampires—blood-suckers—creatures too vile to breathe the same air as a human! My father died—and I exterminated them as a private child will exterminate blow-flies!"

He spoke without emotion, and it was obvious that he regarded the killing of Cuffe, Murchison and Day as a duty which had to be done.

"Until a month ago I had never left this home of mine," continued the killer-cool. "It was my father's desire that I should live here in peace and contentment, and he was so kind and so thoughtful for my every wish and whim that I never had the heart to oppose him." He sank into a chair, and his repulsive face became curiously softened. "For many years I was quite content with my toys and my hobbies—with my education, so meticulously tutored by my father. He gave me everything I desired, from boyhood into manhood. I was supposed to be his steward, his servant. Everybody in the Manor House—everybody in the district—believed me to be dumb, and it was good to find that belief. Only of recent years have I begun to break away and gaze into the world. Perhaps my radio and my television are partly responsible for my restlessness. I heard things and saw things that gave me a glimpse of what I might hear and see—"

He broke off and sighed. "Strange that my only real contact with the outside world should be a man of your

criminal stamp and character," he continued, after a moment. "Strange—and significant. It was as though Fate had paved the way for the events which are now taking place. For you are the very type of man I used, Cranston."

"Listen, buddy, all this don't make sense—"

"A month ago my father was ill—just a slight attack of flu," said Dick solemnly. "No doubt his great constitutional strength was weakened by this illness, although he did not know it—and thus the poisoned wound he sustained a week ago turned to general septicæmia. But here is the point, Cranston. For the first time in my long memory my father was confined to his bed for three days, and he was unable to make his usual daily visits to the Peak! It was my opportunity! I could deal out without his knowledge, I could be absent for a night and a day, and yet another night."

"I get it," nodded Cranston. "You played hooky?"

"I made the rubber mask months ago; I wore it for hours on end in order to get accustomed to its feel," continued Dick, rising to his feet and peering lithely up and down. "When this unexpected chance came, I set out one night at dusk, and I walked to London."

"Walked! All the way?" "Twenty miles or so—nothing!" said Dick impatiently. "I was tired, yes. It was past midnight when I reached London's West End, of which I had so often dreamed. And I was obliged to skulk in doorways, and hide my face under my muffler," he added bitterly. "The 'human' mask, of which I had been so proud, attracted more attention than my black face would have done. I was bewildered by the dazzling lights and the noisy traffic, and the great rumbling motor-buses. All I wanted to do was to get back, and I was tired."

"Yeah, you was right about Fate, buddy," nodded Cranston, staring at the restless figure of his host. "Walked right in front of my car, didn't ya, outside that kooky clip-joint in Wardour Street? When I started bawlin' you out, ya showed a roll of smackers into my duke and begged me to drive ya home."

"A strange meeting," said Dick, his eyes burning. "Any other man might have refused. But a man of your type, no. The money was the language you understood. I got out of your car five miles from Chalcot Manor, and when we parted I had your name and your telephone number. You knew nothing, but I had somebody from the outside world with whom I could talk. I wonder, my friend, if you ever realized just what that meant to me! On the evening my father died my fetters were broken, and something inside me was broken, too. I thought of Cuffe and Murchison and Day, celebrating at the Brighton-Hitz. I telephoned you, and you came with your car. You agreed to help."

"When a guy jerks five grand into my duke, what do you think?" said Tod Cranston promptly. "The most I ever got for bumping a guy in Chicago was a lousy five centimes. And ya only wanted me to drive the car, anyways! Say, where ya got all that jack, pal?"

"My father always kept a great deal of cash on hand—thousands, tens of thousands!" replied the other dourly. "The last of his private fortune in cash, ready to pay over to those dirty Blackmailers! There's still a lot left—"

He broke off and strode into an adjoining room. When he came back he was carrying a handful of money. "Here, two thousand pounds.

You helped me with Murchison and Day, and I promised you the same figure."

"Gee, boss, you're tops!" said the thug, as he greedily took the money. "Ten grand! Why, I never knew there was so much dough!" Without troubling to count the wad, he thrust it into his pocket. "But, listen. You ain't on the level about Lord Chalcot being your real father, are ya?"

"When my father was young, he had no prospect of ever inheriting the Chalcot title," replied Dick swiftly. "He was adventurous; he had a roving spirit. At the Robbinston Goldfields in Australia, he fell in love with the storekeeper's daughter—my mother. She was white and beautiful—as white as her own parents. And when I came I was—black!"

"It don't make sense!" "Not until I was born did my father make inquiries. One of my grandfathers—or great-grandfathers, I forget which—had 'gone native' and married an aboriginal woman. They had one child, and that child was white. The black strain did not reappear until I was born." The twelfth Earl of Chalcot laughed mockingly. "And the blackness came, not as a strain, but as a deluge! In appearance I am a full-blooded Bushman. But in thought, in spirit, in intelligence, I am a true son of my father!"

"Gee, can ya beat that!" ejaculated Tod, staring fascinatedly. "I'm getting it now, pal. Cuffe and these other birds knew all about ya, huh? They knew that you wasn't just the servant, but his nite son."

"Day knew it," nodded Dick. "It was Day's mother who had looked after me when I was a baby. She knew the secret, because my father unexpectedly came into his inheritance at that time. Her son served in the European war, in the Australian Forces. He was an officer—a colonel. He started blackmailing my father as soon as he reached England, and his two friends, Murchison and Cuffe, discovered his secret. And all these years they have lived in luxury on their extorted money."

"It was sure a swell set-up," said Cranston dreamily. "With that kind of dope on a guy— Not that they weren't a bunch of low-down hoodlums!" he added hastily. "Well, anyways, they're sure got what was coming to them!"

"There has been one unfortunate mischance," said Lord Chalcot softly. "I was too hasty when I killed Harold Cuffe. Conquest nearly caught me. Bumping into Conquest was a grievous misfortune, for he is dangerous."

"You're telling me!" said Tod, with a shiver. "Say, there's one thing I still don't get. You've crossed off those three rats and you've paid me my split. Why come across with your life story? Howya know I won't doublecross ya?"

"You could not doublecross me, my friend," answered Dick musically. "Very soon I shall proclaim myself Lord Chalcot to the world. Therefore, I fear no black mail from your quarter. Farther, there are—others! My father's Uncle Theodore and his worthless sons! Until they are dead, I cannot be sure of my inheritance, for they may contest my right—"

"Hell! Three more killings!" gasped the thug.

"Four! You have forgotten Conquest! The girl—she need no die."

"Listen, pal," said Cranston heavily. "You can count the oats the Conquest killing. I don't want any part of it. I'd rather play tag with a man-eating tiger!"

"One thousand pounds for each victim—and two thousand pounds for Conquest."

said Lord Chastlen temptingly: "You'll not refuse such money, my good Cramson. And, remember, I take most of the risk."

Cramson's head ached. He made rapid mental calculations, turning English currency into American. Five thousand pounds! Twenty-five thousand dollars! He struggled to his feet and swayed dizzily.

"When do we start, boss?" he muttered.

"We start—now," replied the black killer. "Your car is hidden on the other side of the little wood. Excellent! Uncle Theodore is next on the list, and he dies to-night!"

#### DEATH AT BISHOP'S WOULD.

THE man who believed himself to be the Earl of Chastlen was alone in the study at Bishop's Would. Roderick had not yet got back from the station with his brother, Hilary. The french windows were half open, and the soft, warm air of the early summer night was full of the heavy perfume from the flower-beds.

Dinner was over, Mr. Theodore Smyth, still hot under the collar as a consequence of Norman Conquest's visit, was further irritated by his younger son's characteristic irresponsibility. He had defiantly arranged to travel down by a certain train, and Roderick had made a special journey to the station. Later, quite early, Hilary had phoned through to say he was coming by a later train.

"Was ever a man cursed with more worthless sons?" fumed the Spanish King, as he savagely bit the end of a cigar. "There's never any relying on them!"

He had been a fool to seek Roderick's advice about Conquest. Roderick was only a half-wit at best. Like a perfect imbecile, he had dissuaded his father from informing the police, on the grounds that there might be a lot of unnecessary publicity.

"And I listened to him!" muttered Mr. Smyth testily. "Heaven knows why I should ask Roderick for advice, and I'm damned certain I'm not going to act upon it!"

He seized the telephone and dialed for long distance.

"Whitchell 1212," he said curtly.

"No meeting about with rural police stations—headquarters or nothing!" A little sigh came on Mr. Theodore Smyth's mentality.

"Hallo! Scotland Yard?" he said pompously. When a polite voice inquired his business. "I want to make a complaint. An infernal young upstart named Norman Conquest has been threatening me—"

"One moment, sir," said the polite official's voice.

Mr. Smyth turned. He heard being put on. Another voice presently came over the wires. A voice just as polite, but containing a tread note.

"Something about Conquest, sir?" said this voice. "I'm Chief Inspector Williams. Anything in connection with Conquest is always referred to me. I don't know why—"

Mr. Smyth curtly interrupted. He informed Mr. Williams of his name, his status in the affairs of Government, and his importance in the County of Sussex.

"You may or may not know that I am also the Earl of Chastlen," continued Mr. Smyth grandiloquently. "This fellow Conquest practically forced his way into my house this evening, and related some preposterous story to the effect that my late brother, the eleventh earl, was the victim of blackmailers. Told me that my own life is in danger—and from a black man."



Conquest grabbed the cable that dangled from the descending lift.

It was his only chance.

"In danger from a what?" asked the tired voice.

"A black man!"

"Oh! A black man! Not a chap in a rubber mask?"

"What do you mean—a rubber mask?" said Mr. Smyth angrily. "You will oblige me, inspector, by curbing your salacious—"

"Sorry, sir! Let it go." Mr. Williams was more blunt in his manner. "Tell me more about Conquest. Do I understand that he actually threatened you?"

"Well, not exactly—"

"Did he demand money?"

"No, I can't say that he did."

"Did he attack you in any way?"

"Well, no. I had him thrown out—"

"So you attacked him?" growled the inspector. "Don't you think all this is a waste of good public money, sir? My salary has to be paid out of the rates, you know. It's obvious that you can't make any specific charge against Conquest."

Mr. Smyth went purple.

"Are you daring to criticize my actions, inspector?" he demanded furiously. "What in Scotland Yard do I stand like to know? The protection of private property and personal liberty! I'll report you to your superiors, my fine man! I'll ask a question in Parliament—"

"Who cares?"

"What?" barked Theodore. "What did you say?"

"I said that would be a pity, sir," replied Mr. Williams blandly. "I'm sorry, but we can't restrain Conquest until he has com-

mitted some recognizable breach of the law. You understand, sir? If he does something definite—"

"Fah!" snapped Mr. Smyth.

He rudely slammed the receiver down and seized a pencil. A few notes were indicated, a few white-hot notes while the recent conversation was fresh in his mind. He'd touch this impudent policeman to answer him back—

Out of the corner of his eye he saw something shadowy moving by the window, and he looked round sharply. As he went right, the pencil dropped out of his nerveless fingers. There was only one light on in the study, and it was a table standard with a shade which confined most of the light to the desk. The rest of the room was shrouded in reddish half-lights.

There was somebody in the room—a little, scowling figure which advanced like a wraith. The face was no face at all, but an expressionless mask like some robot nightmarer.

Rubber mask!

Mr. Smyth did not actually associate the uncanny appearance of the intruder with that cryptic question asked by Inspector Williams, his thoughts rather flew to the gun warning which Norman Conquest had uttered. But they were confused thoughts at best. He half struggled up, startled and angry and fearful.

As he opened his mouth to utter a shout for help the Killer Earl sprang into the circle of light, and Mr. Smyth obtained a close-up of his visitor. The cry was strangled in his throat, and every trace of colour drained out of his face.

An arm like rawhide leather whipped round the fat, flabby neck, and Mr. Smyth was held as in a vice. Something bright flashed in the light from the lamp standard—a hypodermic needle sent its plunger home. Just as a probed balloon will collapse, so Mr. Theodore Smyth sagged and folded up.

Murder in fifteen seconds! Murder without a sound!

Lord Chastlen stood over his uncle's quivering body and his breathing was quiet and even. Only the brilliant glimmer on his eyes betrayed his emotion. There was no sign of remorse, no hint of compassion. This man had been in his way, and his removal was essential. For years Dick's father had talked bitterly of his brother's meanness and selfishness and self-important arrogance. The picture which Dick had formed of his Uncle Theodore had always been an unpleasant one. Was such a man to thrust him out of his rightful inheritance? The living Uncle Theodore was far worse than any mental picture. Now he was not even true.

"It is so easy," whispered the black killer.

His hands, like his face, were rubber covered. He slipped the shining syringe into his pocket and turned to the open french window. He beckoned.

Cramson materialised out of the darkness.

"Take him!" breathed Dick.

Cramson felt at that moment that he was earning his thousand pounds. This kind of game was sheer crummin'! If anybody should happen in time and catch them red-handed—! But Dick had nerves of steel, and had no fear of interruption. He stood by while Cramson, gorilla-like in his strength, gathered up the bulky body of Uncle Theodore and carried it out into the night.

A queer partnership! The black Lord Chastlen, brought up in seclusion and sececy, and the small-time gangster! Yet

how helpless Dick would have been without the aid of this cheap drug! He had no knowledge of the English roads, no skill for driving a car, and his black skin prohibited him from making any open appearance, for let there be any hint that a black man was associated in any of these deaths, and the guilt would be pinned right at his door! Yes, Ted Conquest was worth every penny of the money he was earning!

Dick remained in Uncle Theodore's study for a few busy minutes. Then like a sitting shadow he passed out. He joined Conquest in a neighbouring country lane, and Conquest's car went gliding away.

As it did so another car, a snappy sports roadster, came roaring up the drive. This time Hilary had really come. Unlike his lank and weedy brother, he was short, stout, and the owner of pig-like features. Hilary was a fellow who behaved in having a good time—all the time.

"Neither come and report yourself to the governor straight away," suggested Roderick. "You know what a build-up there'll be if you don't. He's sure enough already."

"Because I didn't come down by the earlier train?" asked Hilary. "Dummit, Rod, it's a bit thick." He still treats us as though we were a couple of kids!"

There was a sudden, silky look on his face when he went with his elder brother to the study.

"Hallo! What the devil— Look at this, Hil!" Roderick, in the study doorway, stared into the room with mingled astonishment and alarm. "Wonder what could have happened?"

The study was in great disorder. Chairs were overturned, and there were signs that a big fight had taken place. Most remarkable of all, the sign "1944" had been scrawled on all the walls in blood-red chalk, and on the bludgeoned, too.

"The governor!" gasped Roderick. "What's happened to the governor?" He looked about him wildly. "He said he'd be in the study. You know what an old stickler he is for that sort of thing. He's gone, Hil!"

"Gone where?" asked Hilary stupidly. "I saw, what are all these silly numbers chalked on the walls? Somebody must have gone loco! Ten-sixty-six—"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Roderick, with a jump. "That fellow, Conquest! He came to see the governor earlier this evening, and the old boy was fighting mad. Do you think Conquest could have done all this?"

Even as he asked the question, the conviction came upon him that some serious disaster had befallen his father, and that Norman Conquest was responsible.

The telephone-bell rang shrilly. "I'll get it," said Roderick, reaching for the receiver. "Hallo! Awfully sorry, but if you'd ring up later—"

"That," said a cool, steady voice, "is Norman Conquest."

"What!"

"You are Roderick Smyth?"

"Yes, but—"

"Your father was Earl of Chalcote for less than forty-eight hours," said the voice deliberately. "You will be earl for less!"

Click! Then a dead line.

"Hey! Hold on!" yelled Roderick.

"What the hell— He hung up on me!" he said blankly. "It was Conquest, and he hardly said anything."

But the words which had come over the wires drummed in Roderick Smyth's head like a tattoo of thunder as their full and awful significance burst upon his realization.

He trembled violently. What could those words have meant—except that his father

was dead, and that he, Roderick, was to be the doer?

#### SNAGS IN THE PATH.

NORMAN CONQUEST WAS in his workshop-laboratory "Underneath the Archway" when Mandeville Livingstone answered the door to a species of human hurricane which turned out to be Chief Inspector Williams.

"Where's Conquest?" demanded the inspector gruffly, as he strode through the lobby into the comfortable lounge. "I don't want any of your damned alibis, Livingstone— Oh, hello, Miss Eyward!"

"What's this?" asked Joy, turning in her chair. "A visit from the Gestapo?"

"You're just about hot it!" replied Mr. Williams, his apple-cheeked face unpleasantly flushed, his normally placid eyes burning like a couple of arc-lights. "Show me a Gestapo or an OGPU agent more ferocious than I am, and it'll be a miracle! I've got a whole lot of questions to ask Conquest—"

"But I can't guarantee, Sweet William, that I'll give you a whole lot of answers," said Norman Conquest, striding into the room on his shriveled feet. "I thought I heard your noble tones, Will. What's the trouble? Don't tell me that there's a rift in the Conquest-Williams Axis!"

"No, it's not a rift," said Mr. Williams heavily. "Call it an avalanche! There isn't any Conquest-Williams Axis, begging your pardon, Miss Eyward."

"Joy to you," said the girl sweetly.

The inspector flung his hat into a chair. "How the hell can I breathe free when you're both so damned friendly?" he complained. "But don't think I'm softening," he added, swinging round on the Desperado. "You can't get away with all this high-pressure stuff, Conquest!"

"What high-pressure stuff?"

"Don't stand there and say you don't know what I'm talking about, or I'll scream," exploded Mr. Williams, who was evidently suffering deeply. "This afternoon you bring a couple of dead bodies to Scotland Yard and virtually dump them in my lap, and go off without explaining a thing. It doesn't matter to you, I suppose, that the Chief has threatened to kick me out of the force unless I compel you to talk? If it hadn't been for me, he would have issued a warrant for your arrest."

"And a lot of lot of good that would have done," said Norman, as he poured two liberal whiskies. "Have a drink, Will, and simmer down. I hate reminding you of the fact, but didn't I warn you to place your strongest watchdogs over Murchison and Day? The man who killed Cuffe, killed them—"

"But who is this wholesale killer?" broke in the inspector sharply. "You must know, Conquest, or you couldn't have recovered the bodies so quickly." He took a gulp of whisky and looked calmer. "And the method of killing?" he went on, with a helpless shrug. "Do you know how those two men were killed?"

"No."

"A virulent toxin, probably some kind of snake poison, was introduced directly into the blood-stream by means of a hypodermic needle," said Mr. Williams grimly. "That means instantaneous death, Conquest. It's all wrong! Things like that don't happen outside the pages of a shilling shocker!"

Norman Conquest's jaw tightened.

"It is in very nicely," he said thoughtfully. "You know, Will, I was coming round to talk to you this evening, and you've saved me the trouble. I think you ought to rush out a few of your strong-arm men to a place called Bishop's Weald—"

He broke off as the inspector jumped a clear foot in the air.

"Bishop's Weald!" yelled Mr. Williams. "That's what I really came to talk to you about. Earlier this evening I had a 'phone message from a man named Smyth—Theodore Smyth, the M.P. He's the new Lord Chalcote, really. He told me, Conquest, that you had been threatening him, and that he had had you kicked out of his house."

"That's not strictly true—"

"What a snigger! Let me finish!" Mr. Williams looked hard at the dare-devil young adventurer. "I'm on my way to Bishop's Weald now, and I broke my journey to call on you. Not half an hour ago I had another 'phone message—this time from Smyth's son, Roderick Smyth. His father has disappeared, and there are '1066' signs all over the study. A man calling himself Norman Conquest rang up and threatened Roderick with death—"

"Good heavens!" and Norman frostily. "I suspected that the old speech mechanism was in danger, but I didn't believe that Master Face would strike again so quickly. I tried to warn the poor fool, that's why I went to see him this evening, Will. He just wouldn't listen. He thought I was trying to crook him. In the end he called his servants to throw me out—He's dead, of course—killed just like the others."

"Why 'of course'?" demanded Mr. Williams sharply.

"Because it would be inconsistent to think anything else," answered Norman. "You know perfectly well, Will, that I had no hand in the bumping of Miles Murchison or Colonel Day. I tried to save them, just as I tried to save that self-saved Smyth paragon."

"Believe that; but—"

"Listen, Will! Rafael Cuffe and his two pals were all killed by Teewoonba Dick."

"By whom?"

"Alma Rubber Face," continued Norman tensely. "And the bodies of Cuffe and Brother Theodore are probably at the top of Roger's Peak at this very minute. The bodies of Murchison and Day would have been up there, too, if I hadn't been one jump ahead. By the way, you'd better guard those bodies like nobody's business. Sweet William, or you'll lose them."

The inspectors face was a picture of acute bewilderment.

"You're talking utter nonsense!" he ejaculated. "Why would anybody want to snatch dead bodies— Good heavens! They snatched Cuffe's body, though!" He breathed hard. "Go on with what you were saying."

Norman went on. He decided, then and there, to "come clean." Mr. Williams was in such a sore plight that it was only fair to tell him everything.

"The man with the rubber mask, the man I chased down St. James' Street on the night of Cuffe's murder, is this Bushman steward of Roger's Peak, and the Desperado, with conviction. He seems to have served the notorious Lord Chalcote faithfully since boyhood, and nothing sensational happened until his master unexpectedly died. Everything at Chalcote believed that Teewoonba Dick is dumb. But he's not dumb, Will."

"How do you know that?"

"Because when I grabbed Rubber Face, he spoke to me in a voice of unusual refinement and culture, and he told me that he would have to add my effigy to his collection."

"That was Rubber Face," said Mr. Williams readily. "There's no proof that this black fellow is the same—"



"This afternoon I was at the top of Roger's Peak, and I had a scrap with Toowoomba Dick," continued Norman, inhaling a deep lungful of cigarette smoke. "He spoke to me—the dumb black man—he spoke to me in the same cultured voice. And I had just been examining his private warworks."

Mr Williams suddenly sat down as though his legs had turned to sorbo rubber. He considerably peered a large whisky and thrust it into his hand. The inspector drank mechanically.

"I can't go back to the Chief and tell him this Karlof-Frankenstein twaddle," he complained in a mournful voice. "He'd have me put into a padded cell!"

"Pull yourself together, Sweet William!" urged Norman. "All you've got to do is to get a search-warrant."

"A what?"

"A warrant giving you authority to search Chalston Manor—and that naturally includes Roger's Peak, which is on the manor grounds," drawled the cool "1666."

"Well, go down there together, and we'll find the bodies of Cuffs and Smyth, and you'll be able to nab Toowoomba Dick on the spot. So simple. Your evidence will be right in your hands."

"So simple!" exploded Mr. Williams. "Good heavens, man, do you suppose we keep search-warrants in a store-cupboard, along with the stationery? A pair of the Realm lying dead in his ancestral home—funeral to-morrow—and cops raiding the place with search-warrants! You're crazy!"

Norman sighed.

"I'm apt to forget all this red tape—"

"Red tape, my foot!" growled Mr. Williams. "No magistrate or Justice of the Peace will sign a warrant unless certain evidence is laid before him. That's one of the traditional rights of the British citizen—only you wouldn't know anything about that! You may know that this Toots-a-boon-de-ay Dick, or whatever his damned name is, is a killer, but that's not evidence. Not in the eyes of the law, at any rate!"

"You're wrong, Bill," said Norman Conquest grimly. "I don't know. But I want to know—and I'm going to know! The angle I can't figure out is the motive. What's the terrific driving force behind this black servant?"

"The man's crazy," granted the inspector. "Or it's more likely that you're crazy."

"He's as sane as you are, Sweet William," insisted the Desperado. "He knows exactly what he's doing, and I believe he's doing it all to a set plan."

"You'll be saying next that Lord Chalston—the 'Mystery Earl,' as they called him—was murdered, too?"

"No, I don't think so," disagreed Norman. "You see, I've had a talk with the Chalston family doctor."

"The devil you have!"

"And there's not the slightest doubt that Lord Chalston died because he selected a comparatively simple flesh wound. The wound turned septic, and general blood-poisoning set in long before Dr. Twitshell was called in. Then it was too late." Norman paced restlessly. "No, Bill, all these sensational things have happened because Lord Chalston died naturally."

"I give up!" said the worried inspector, as he reached for his hat and looked at his watch. "Well, I've stayed here a lot too long! It's all so inconclusive, Conquest. So much in the air. Mostly your own guesswork—"

"But what guesswork, brother?"

"I know—I know!" admitted Mr

Williams. "You're a dabbler at guessing right, but I can't take the risks you've been suggesting. I'm not going to arrest you, anyhow, because I'm satisfied in my own mind that you had nothing to do with the new Lord Chalston's death. Anybody could have scowled those 1666 signs on the walls, and anybody could have done the 'phoning. I've got to go to Bishop's Weald to investigate the disappearance of *his* master. If you can help me to find him—"

"I've told you I can," said Norman calmly. "Come with me to Roger's Peak."

Mr Williams merely made rude noises and took his departure.

"Looks as though I shall have to go alone," said Norman.

Outside the Arches, Conquest's home, Cranston flung a bag over Pixie's head. It was the neatest snitch he had ever pulled off.



"To Roger's Peak!"

"Where else? Toowoomba Dick swoops on Bishop's Weald an hour or two after my visit, and the new Lord Chalston vanishes into thin air. Of course I'm going to Roger's Peak!"

Joy rose, smothering a shiver.

"Do we start right away?"

"I can't forget Toowoomba Dick's private warworks," said Norman absently. "Cuffs, Murchison, Day—all dead! And the other three warworks are effigies of Theodore Smyth and his two sons. I didn't know it at the time, but I knew at the instant I walked into the Spanach King's study. And Brother Theodore has gone the same way as the three blackmailers. It looks as ugly as hell, Pixie!"

He turned on her, and his expression softened.

"What did you say just now?" he went on. "Nothing doing, Bright Eyes! You're

staying here. Better still, go and get some supper among the bright lights."

"But you'll need me."

"You're not coming to Roger's Peak!" he snarled, taking her gently by the shoulders. "I've only seen you scared once, Pixie, and that was when that black devil scared you this afternoon."

The girl looked troubled.

"I can't understand it," she said, smiling a little closer. "I don't know why I was frightened. He didn't do anything. I just looked at me, and, if anything, his regular face softened and became gentle. And I ran—for my life! I think it was something in his eyes. He seemed to be looking right into me—possessing me—"

She shivered again.

"The black-hearted ghoul!" said Norman Conquest fiercely. "Listen, Pixie, I've got to go! And you mustn't worry. I won't take any fool chances, I promise you that. And you've got to promise me to relax."

She promised, but her heart was troubled.

#### THE SHAFT OF DEATH

TOD CRANSTON was ready to admit that he had never earned easier money, but he was more of a flitfarter than a man by the time he had driven back to Chalston Park Motoring along English country roads at a comparatively early hour of the night with stuff in the back of the car was not Mr Cranston's idea of amusement. He had sweated during every mile of that drive from Bishop's Weald, and he had positively trembled when his strange employer had compelled him to stop for some minutes outside a lonely telegraph-box.

The black-skinned Lord Chalcot was seemingly indifferent to the dangers. He silenced every one of his odd partners' protestations with a bland assurance that there was no danger whatever.

The thing was, of course, Lord Chalcot was wrong. There was a whole ton of danger. But Dick was profoundly ignorant of the everyday world, of police patrols, and of a hundred-and-one other snags which might bring disaster.

He was tranquilly happy to have a fast car at his disposal, and a driver who was crooked enough to do as he was told without asking questions. More than once he had felt that his chance meeting with the small-time gunman was a stroke of sheer providence. A man as clever as himself would have been a menace. Tod was the exact type. Without Tod he could have done nothing.

"Oce, boss, this game has got me all tied up in knots!" muttered Cranston, after the body of Uncle Theodore had been conveyed up the lift of Roger's Peak and deposited in Dick's private morgue. "Why do ya hafta bring the stuffs back here? Every minute of that ride was plain hell!"

"You exaggerate the dangers, my friend," interrupted Dick softly. "We are here safely, are we not? Come!" He took Tod back into the lift and raised a small trap in the floor close against the back. He motioned for the man to get down on his knees, and Cranston obeyed. Crawling through the trap-opening, he looked right down the terrifyingly deep shaft. All was dark, except for a little glow of reflected light at the very bottom.

"What's the idea, pal?"

"You will watch—for Conquest?"

Cranston jumped.

"Conquest!" he said hoarsely. "Howja know that package of high explosive is coming?"

"He's coming," said Lord Chalcot gently.

"Oh, yeah! Then it's me for the big open spaces!"

"Don't be a fool, Cranston," said Dick, his manner becoming curt and authoritative. "You will stay here on the watch. Conquest will probably lower the lift, but you will see his shadow before then, and can get out. Report to me as soon as you see anything unusual."

Cranston's second-rate wits were not capable of appreciating the subtlety of Dick's plan. That brief telephone message to Roderick Smyth, in the name of Norman Conquest, had not been a mere expression of the black killer's vanity. It was an addition to the "1935" signs chalked on the study walls. Dick knew that his frightened colleague would at once telephone for the police, and the police would lose no time in getting hold of Norman Conquest. But Conquest would almost certainly have a cast-iron alibi. Easy enough to prove that he had been miles away at the time of Mr. Smyth's kidnapping.

And Conquest would know the real author of the crime, he would be infuriated, and he would make a bee-line for Roger's Peak. He had been here once to-day, and he would come again—if only because Dick had attempted to involve him!

Clever and subtle, indeed—up to a point. The desperado was already on his way. But he wasn't infuriated. Never in all his hectic career had his brain been cooler, his nerve steadier. The opposition did not include squadrons of spies and murder agents—as former opponents had done—but he had a feeling that one tiny slip, one instant of carelessness, and he would be no

better than a workhorse! This Toxcomb Dick knew was the hottest thing on two legs he had ever encountered.

Accordingly, when Norman arrived at Roger's Peak, he proceeded with extraordinary caution. There were lights glowing in the windows of the pen-top cycle, and the grounds of Chalcot Manor were full of brooding silence. An owl was hooting in a tree-top, and a half-wit cock was crowing in the distance.

Norman was on the alert for trouble. For traps of every size and description. If he had had a couple of spare eyes in the back of his head, he could not have been more watchful. His interest in Roger's Peak was not so much connected with the dead Spine King—for Norman was convinced that Mr. Smyth's body was already in the collection—but with Toxcomb Dick. He was determined to discover the motive behind the bizarre killings.

Well, there were no traps outside. The cliff door was unguarded. Norman was not interrupted as he inserted his delicate lock-pick into the keyhole, and after he had got the door open and was within the subway tunnel, there was still no sign of a catch.

But he did not relax. Perhaps his super-senses were not really necessary. This black fellow was no experienced criminal, but a raw amateur. In some ways his amateur status made him far more dangerous, but in other ways the reverse applied. A man who would hide dead bodies under a heap of leaves in a wood was not likely to think up any elaborate death-traps for a possible intruder. His methods were apt to be simple and direct, and such methods, as Norman knew from experience, were far the more dangerous. He was a direct method expert himself.

Norman didn't like the lights in the subway. He couldn't give his super-senses a chance of successfully working, and he was painfully conscious of the fact that he made an easy mark as he advanced towards the lift shaft. However, it was reasonable to suppose that the lights were usually kept on during the evening. Yet it was always dark in the tunnel, and there had been no lights on when he had made his earlier visit.

The hair-trigger alertness relaxed slightly when he reached the lift. There was no gate. Otherwise, the lift shaft and the lift itself were commonplace enough. As he crouched towards the opening his shadow fell across the doorway. The lift was not at the bottom. He had not expected it to be there. But there was a button by which it could be brought down.

At the top of the shaft Tod Cranston went still. He had seen the faint shadow far, far below. He stared through the trap opening fascinatedly. He saw the brief flash of a small electric torch.

And then Cranston gave one leap out of the lift, his neck nearly freezing. He had had no wish to be trapped in the lift, and earned down and brought face to face with the man he feared more than the entire police force of Kent!

He raced to inform Dick.

Norman Conquest, with his finger hovering near the control button, had hesitated. The most perfect of elevators are not entirely noiseless in their operation. He remembered how he, himself, had been warned of the lift's approach during his earlier visit. He felt rather helpless. Now that he was here, on the spot, he was halted. He could bring the lift down, yes, but in doing so he would warn the opposition that he had arrived. Might just as well stand outside and announce himself with a megaphone!

"Damn!" said the desperado softly.

He flashed a tiny pencil of light into the shaft, and his hazel-grey eyes hardened. Right opposite, attached to the back wall of the shaft, was a steel ladder. He looked upwards. The ladder ascended right up into the misty darkness. A flimsy enough nature, snuggling close against the shaft, and black and grimy with dust.

Clearly an emergency ladder!

Norman Conquest's thoughts hummed like a dynamo. Of course, an emergency ladder was more or less necessary. This was no ordinary lift shaft, such as one finds in a high building, with exits at every floor. There were only two exits—one at the bottom and one at the top. And there was always the chance that the lift might refuse to operate. Lifts do have these temperamental spells occasionally.

And a fine mess the late Lord Chalcot would have been in if the little elevator had ever struck work half-way on its upward or downward journey! He would have been impounded like a rat in a trap, perhaps for days, while lift engineers were rushed from London to correct the fault. Some kind of emergency exit was essential.

"A ladder running up the shaft," murmured Norman slowly. "But supposing the lift were to stop somewhere in the shaft, how could the occupant get at the ladder? There must be some way of reaching—and quite easily. Obviously a trap-door in the floor of the lift, a trap-door at the back, so that one can lower one's self straight on to the ladder."

Possibilities. If there was no trap-door, the ladder was merely useless. Of course, there was a trap-door! And Norman, after climbing up the ladder, could open it—say, by using up to the pen-top cycle—advertising his approach!

He clambered a few rungs of the ladder, testing it. Strong enough. A long climb, but he was agile and strong. It would only take him a few minutes. An icy little quiver slipped along his spine as a chilling thought struck him. What if Toxcomb Dick were to use the lift during those few minutes?

Nasty. The lift was a high-speed one, and Norman would be simply wiped off the ladder and hurled to certain death. Yet he was taking a pretty big chance by climbing the ladder, and it was a chance which needed full and careful consideration.

Norman gave it full and careful consideration—for about ten seconds. Then he started streaking up the shaft like a human squirrel. It was the only possible way, so he had to take it. And it was characteristic of the reckless Trouble Hunter to take this deadly chance.

The odds, he considered, were entirely in his favour. Ordinarily, there was very little likelihood that the elevator would be used. Toxcomb Dick had completed his daily mission for this evening, and admitting that he was a fast worker, it was natural that he would now take a breather.

How right the wily Norman had been in his assessment of the opposition's direct methods!

Dick had raced for the lift on getting Cranston's frantic report. He expected to find the lift on its way down, and he was ready to blast Norman Conquest's head off when the lift came up again. But the lift wasn't going down! Norman Conquest had not even touched the control button!

Dick went on his hands and knees at the trap-door and lowered his face to the floor level. He stared down. Nothing. Nothing but darkness and the tiny patch

of glowing, reflected light far below. For Cranston's nerves had been playing tricks with him.

Then those average qualities which he had inherited from his abandoned forbears came to his aid. Even his acute eyesight could detect nothing, but his abnormal hearing caught a curious whispering, shuffling sound, a tiny evanescent rhythmic shuffling. And he knew the answer in a split-second. Norman Conquest was climbing the ladder, and slumping it at express speed! The sounds which came to Dick's ears were caused by Norman's hands and feet touching the rungs as he ascended.

A soft contemptuous chuckle escaped from Dick's slightly parted lips. This far-famed Norman Conquest was only a fool, after all. He had laid himself open to a death from which there was no escape.

"What is it, boss?" came a creak from Ted.

"Our rash friend is climbing the emergency ladder," murmured Lord Chalston absently. "He is a third of the way up already. Now very simple to deal with him!"

He touched the control button, and the little elevator went shooting down on its journey of death. The shaft became filled with a soft whirling, and the displaced air went rushing down in a miniature gale.

"Not so good!" said Norman Conquest faintly.

The gods were not with him to-night. By the most infernal of unlucky chances he was trapped. He stared up, and he knew that chance had played no part in the game. For he could see a faint square of light far above, descending swiftly. The trap-door opening! Proof that Twooomba Dick was coming down with the knowledge that Norman was on the ladder—with the hideous intention of wiping him off that ladder to his death!

Not such a cheap amateur, at that! Norman's respect for Rubber Face went up a couple of notches. His heart was thudding like a steamhammer—a most unusual occurrence. This time it was IT! No possibility of escape. Death in its sickest form. If he had been able to slide down the ladder he might have taken the desperate chance, but he couldn't even do that. The ladder was fixed so closely to the wall that he couldn't get his legs round it.

And then the Killer East, in the very act of destroying his enemy, gave Norman that gasp-gone thread of escape that was all he needed.

What Dick did was to take a powerful electric torch from his pocket, switch it on, and cast the beam down the shaft before the swiftly descending elevator. Just that. But it was enough for the ingenious Desperado! Dick wanted to see his victim's face as death swept down upon him. But what Norman Conquest saw was a black and greasy steel cable swaying like a snake in the middle of the shaft, and preceding the lift.

A fragmentary moment of hesitation and the chance would have been gone for ever. Norman did not hesitate. The lift was hurtling down upon him as he sprang with beautiful timing. For he was actually falling sheer as he struck the cable, as his hands gripped it, as his knees curled round it. And as the cable itself was dropping, too, his hand remained glued-like.

Perhaps he had only delayed death by a few dramatic seconds, for he would inevitably be crushed to pulp under the lift when it reached the bottom. But Norman's lightning brain had remembered two things. He had travelled down in the lift once, and he recalled that it automatically

braked twenty or thirty feet before it reached the bottom. And there was no gate!

Total factors in this grim game of life and death!

He was aware of a smothering grip above him. The light of Dick's electric torch was full upon him as he swung on the descending cable, and he expected to hear the blasting reports of a gun, or see the flashing glint of a knife. But Dick was not ready for this unexpected emergency, and he had no time to bring out his weapons.

Norman's eyes were glued on the glow from the open gateway beneath him. He felt the speed slacken, and he gripped harder. The timeliest manipulation, and it would be curtains, anyhow.

Suddenly he hurried himself forward, and he shot through the opening like a human bullet with a bare inch to spare—an inch between life and bone-crushing death! He hurtled across the tunnel, striking with grim and awful force. And luck, which had attended him so handsomely until this moment, gave him the slip.

Even while he was falling, he managed to get his gun into his hand, for he knew that the next few seconds were likely to be grim. And his elbow caught against the wall of the tunnel, and drove the gun-muzzle with stunning force against his own head! A miracle, nothing else, prevented his finger from squeezing the trigger. Dazed and dizzy, he half struggled up.

"Hold him, Cranston!"

Dick and the frightened thing had fairly belched out of the lift, and Cranston gave one leap which took him sprawling over Norman Conquest's body. And Lord

Chalston took a delicate little gleaming syringe from his pocket and plunged the needle into Norman's arm.

"You are too slippery, my friend," came the refined voice which the Desperado knew so well. "See if you can get out of this tangle! I am very glad you have come. Did you bring the charming Miss Errard? I shall soon know, Conquest. Yes, I am going to bring her, too."

NORMAN heard the words as though from afar. Dizzy from the blow on the head, he had not been entirely unconscious. But now a deadly sleep was clouding his brain. He remembered what had happened to others when that deadly needle had been pressed home; he remembered Sweet William's talk of snake poison. Well, this was the final exit, and he famously mimicked the manner of it. To go down fighting, yes but to succumb to a poisoned needle outraged all his betting instincts. He tried to struggle, but the sleep was overwhelming him, and everything was going black.

"Jumpin' cain!" gasped Ted Cranston, staring fascinatedly. "Cone! Cone just like the others!"

"No, not precisely like the others," murmured Lord Chalston, with an amused chuckle. "I have something very special in mind for Mr. Conquest—" He broke off and rose abruptly to his feet. "We will leave him here, my friend. We must find his car—and his girl!" His voice became suddenly tender. "Particularly his girl!" "Eow, ya givin' me the willies!" stammered Ted. "Don't ya think you'd better lay off the dame?"

"She may not have come this time."

And the Shadow will be with you again in further chapters of RIVER OF DEATH.

## To My Readers

THERE are several ways of getting rid of unwanted men, especially if they happen to have broken the law of the land. Should they be aliens, then the process is simplified. They can be kicked out of the country.

That is what happened to Dan Murphy. Uncle Sam gave him free board and lodging in Sing Sing for a time, and after that placed him aboard a liner with a free passage to England. The fact that his young wife went with him had nothing to do with the authorities, but it made all the difference to Dan. He would have been lost without her quick wit and courage.

Things became complicated. There was a film star due to travel by the same boat, only he missed it. And as Dan happened to be so much like him as to fool all the fans who gathered to greet him on landing at Southampton—well, it was awkward, to say the least. But there was money in it, and Jenny saw that in a flash. It was too good to miss.

Besides, there was Big Joe and the boys of the gang already waiting in England with a different kind of greeting for Dan Murphy. Something had to be done about all these things, and Dan and Jenny did it slickly and deftly. They had little choice in the matter. Not wanted in U.S.A. and unwelcome in England! They were in a hot spot.

How they got out of that fix and cashed in on the deal into the bargain makes a grand, long, complete story which you will find in next week's THRILLER Library. Note the title—NOT WANTED IN U.S.A., by Ludbrook Black.

In the same issue Sanister Brandt continues his ruthless schemes in another fine instalment of that amazing story, THE BRAIN, by Walter Tyne.

*The Editor*

Letters to The Editor should be addressed to: "The Thriller" Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.A.



PLEASE NOTE.

Next week's "THRILLER" Library will be on sale FRIDAY, MAY 26th.

There was  
a snarl from  
Rubber Face  
as he stooped  
over the hole.  
The bodies  
had disap-  
peared.



continued Dick, as though speaking to himself, "if not, she must be fetched. And quickly—quickly! Before she can become alarmed by Conquest's non-return."

Again he was thankful that he had a skilled car-driver at his disposal, and a man who could be trusted to undertake a little job of kidnapping. Yes, Conquest was worth all the money he was getting. And, if not, he was glad to give it. He brought her safely to Roger's Peak, he could have any man he desired—three thousand, four thousand, five thousand! The Killer Earl's money values were rudimentary.

It was quite late when Joy stepped out of a taxi at the bottom of Chelsea Lane, Baywater. She had not changed herself, but, acting on Norman's advice, she had lit the "bright lights" for supper, but there was no fun in being alone. She and Norman had many friends in London whom they could quickly reach, but, somehow, she had not felt inclined for company. She was inwardly worried by her daren't partner's trip, and although her feelings, she could not quite understand herself. She had never worried like this before.

He would not be home yet, of course. But she would be on the spot when he did return.

Half-way up the dark backwater, with the lighted windows of "Underneath the Arches" glowing in a friendly way just ahead, she halted. A shadowy figure had detached itself from one of the dimmed arches and was blocking her path.

"Miss Everard?" came a hoarse whisper. "Why, yes," said the girl quickly. "Who are you?"

"Message from Mr. Conquest—" speaking. Joy Conquest was speaking. He suddenly whipped a heavy cloth bag over Joy's head and lifted her off the ground. This was a job he hated, but the money Toowoomba Dick had promised him had fairly made his eyes bulge.

"Good love to! What's going on?" Maudeline Livingston came running to the spot. The little ex-tramp, anxious and worried, had been wretched and alert; he had heard the taxi stop and go on again. He had opened the door in readiness for Joy.

Half-suspicious, half-alarmed, he was nevertheless quite unprepared for Conquest's rushing attack. The man was a human goliath. His gaunt face, creased and wrinkled into the little man's face, and Livingston turned a complete back somersault, to sprawl unconscious on the ground. And Joy, struggling, was still in Conquest's arms! Just fifteen seconds of high-speed action!

Conquest's car was not far away. When he carried his prisoner into it, she was tied hand and foot, and rode in a heavy travelling-trug. With sweat pouring down his face, the chap engaged gears with a trembling hand and drove away.

This class of work was right out of his line. If anybody had told him a few days ago that he would be snatching girls in the open street, and carrying them off by car, he would have laughed with derision. Ted knew the penalties attached to kidnapping in England!

But the money had got him—such money as he had never wildly dreamed of. And all in solid cash! His greedy nature had been unable to resist the temptation. Most surprising thing of all, the snatch had come off. He had pulled it without a hitch.

But during every yard of that ride into Kent, particularly through the well-lighted London streets, he suffered a million tortures. He was a physical wreck by the time he reached his destination.

But he had succeeded, and Joy Everard joined Norman Conquest in the strange sky-cryle of Chatham Manor!

#### SWEET WILLIAM TAKES A HAND.

INSPECTOR WATTS, of the Sussex County Police, scratched his grizzled head discontentedly.

"If you ask me, Mr. Williams, there's something queer about it," he said. "Bit of a mare's nest, in fact. Pity you came all the way from London—"

He shrugged, leaving his sentence unfinished. The man from Scotland Yard had just finished his examination of the study at Roger's Weald, and he was supposed to admit that there was no indication of a tragedy. One or two overturned chairs, a rucked mat and a disordered rug, and the "1666" signs chalked on the walls. Mr. Theodore Smyth—or Lord Chatham, as he preferred to call himself—might have walked out of his own accord, and for private reasons of his own.

In ordinary circumstances, Scotland Yard would not have been called in; and, in point of fact, Mr. Williams had had no invitation from the Sussex police. He was only there because there was a suggestion that Norman Conquest was mixed up in the affair.

He proceeded at once to question the two sons and the domestic staff. He learned all there was to be known about Norman Conquest's earlier visit—how the servants had heard violent voices in the study, how the master of the house had called Travels and the two menservants to chase Conquest out on his neck. Roderick, the elder son, had known nothing about all this until afterwards.

"The g'v'nor was as mad as a hatter," said Roderick. "This Conquest fellow had got him practically berserk. When I came downstairs, after the lighter had been pitched out, the g'v'nor was biting chunks out of the furniture."

"And after your father had disappeared, somebody spoke to you on the telephone?"

"Yes. I'd just got back from the station with Blinny and my younger brother, you know. We found all this disorder, then the 'phone rang, and Conquest said that my father had been Lord Chatham for forty-eight hours, and that I would be Lord Chatham for less. Gave me a bit of a turn, I can tell you. Sort of a threat, what?"

"There's absolutely nothing to prove that the man who spoke to you over the telephone was Conquest," said Mr. Williams, gruffly. "As for those chalk marks—well, anybody with a sketchy knowledge of Conquest's methods could have made them. In fact, there's no true Conquest trademark in this room, and I don't believe he chalked the signs. I'm convinced, in any case, that he did not harm your father, and he's far more likely to protect you, Mr. Smyth, than to hurt you."

"But if Conquest didn't bag the g'v'nor, who did?" asked Roderick, bewildered.

"Do you know what pained between your father and Conquest?"

"Only that Conquest tried to extort money from my father."

"How did he try to extort money?"

"Oh? Well, I don't know." Roderick looked helpless. "The g'v'nor was pretty mad, as I told you and he poch-poched the whole business. Wanted to ring up the police, but I dissuaded him I mean, if Conquest hadn't got anything 'on' my father and couldn't do us any harm, why invite a lot of unsavoury publicity?"

"In other words, your father didn't really tell you what took place at that interview," said Mr. Williams. "He didn't

say, for example, that Conquest's real object was to warn him of some impending danger?"

"Yes, he did; but the g'v'nor wouldn't believe in any danger, and figured that it was Conquest's way of working up an atmosphere," replied Roderick vaguely. "It's got me all flustered, I don't mind telling you. If Conquest didn't come back and grab the g'v'nor, who the devil did?"

"That's easily answered," said the Inspector gravely, his thoughts dwelling on the Despondent's significant and extraordinary story of Toowoomba Dick. "The man who kidnapped your father is the man who told Conquest 'come here to warn your father about. It's a pity he refused to listen.'"

There was a snarl from Rubber Face as he stooped over the hole. The bodies had disappeared.



"You mean—something awful really has happened in the g'v'nor?"

"I'm afraid so, Mr. Smyth."

"Who's dead?"

"Even that might be the case," said Mr. Williams blantly. "And if he is dead, it's his own fault! Conquest tried to help him and he misunderstood Conquest's motives."

"He would!" said Roderick bleakly.

"Just like the g'v'nor! Never listened to anybody! Never even listened to me! Deserve, Inspector, can't we do something? Oughn't you to have squads of police scouring the countryside? The poor old boy might be lying in some ditch!"

Inspector Watts frowned darkly. He disapproved of the Scotland Yard man's alarmist methods. As far as Watts could see, there wasn't the slightest indication that the new Lord Chatham had come to any harm. He was well acquainted with the self-important squinch canner and his arrogant ways, and he was half expecting

Mr. Smyth's return at any minute with a perfectly reasonable explanation of his absence. For Williams to hint that the master of Ebury's Wood was dead—and murdered at that—was pure nonsense.

"Do either of you know if your father was acquainted with a man named Rafael Cuffe?" asked Mr. Williams abruptly, turning on Roderick and Hilary. "Or with two other men named Miles Murpheson and Colonel Day?"

They looked startled.

"Isn't Cuffe the rustic showman chap who was murdered outside a West-End restaurant the other night?" asked Hilary.

"Yes."

"Why should dad know him?"



"I'm asking you, sir. I believe these three men were acquainted with your uncle, the late Lord Chalston, and I thought it possible that your father might have mentioned their names."

"I don't think he knew them at all," said Roderick. "That's not surprising, because the gurnor knew precious little about Uncle Richard. None of us did. Uncle Richard was an unrepentant old stick, and never invited us to Chalston Park. But and I always thought it a bit thick. I mean, having an earl for an uncle, and never having the chance to show him off."

"Yes, that was certainly tough," admitted Mr. Williams dryly. "Your father, I understand, more or less assumed his title as soon as he heard of his brother's death."

"I think the gurnor's a bit bowled over by suddenly becoming an earl," explained Roderick, with a little grin. "You see, he never expected it. We all thought that

Uncle Richard would live to a hundred—and probably marry and have lots of his own, would inherit the title. The gurnor was a bit fed-up with Pritchard when he came down yesterday—"

"Pritchard?"

"Under the lawyer," said Roderick. "Pritchard, Sons, Taverns & Pritchard, of Lincoln's Inn. Old Pritchard's one of the sons. The only one left. He's the firm—"

Mr. Williams had no patience with this feeling.

"Why was your father fed-up?"

"Oh, because old Pritchard was evasive and queer," replied Roderick. "Wanted the gurnor to refrain from using the title until certain legal formalities had been disposed of. When the gurnor asked him what these legal formalities were, Pritchard trotted out some of his high-sounding lawyer jargon. Anyway, the gurnor wasn't having any of it, and Pritchard was looking pretty ask when he went away."

"Hm!" said Mr. Williams disinterestedly.

He didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Suddenly, though, that the late Lord Chalston's lawyer should try to dissuade the next-of-kin from using his rightful title.

"There's a car on the drive," said Hilary, with sudden excitement. He dashed to the open window.

"A taxi, by Jove! Might be dad back!"

But it wasn't dad. It was a pale, frightened old man with a bloodstained bandage round his head, and the only man he wanted to see was Inspector Williams.

"Good God, Livingstone! What's happened?"

"I'd like to speak to you alone, sir."

Mr. Williams took him into the morning-room and closed the door.

"It's Miss Joy, sir," said the little ex-tramp laconically. "Somebody kidnapped her—"

He gave the few vivid details of the snatching as he had seen it. A big, gorilla-like man who had attacked him while he still held the girl in his arms.

"Knocked me clean out, Mr. Williams. I didn't come round for five minutes, and I knew it wasn't any good blowing police whistles. The big brute had had plenty of time to get away. I just grabbed a taxi and drove here."

"Why here?"

"I heard you telling Mr. Conquest—"

"Yes, yes, I see. But why not go to Conquest?"

"Because Mr. Conquest's gone to that Roger's Peak place, down in Kent," said Livingstone indignantly. "There wasn't an earthly chance that I'd get hold of him there, and I believe that's where they're taking Miss Joy. Don't you see, sir? As they came and grabbed Miss Joy, it looks as though they'd already trapped the gurnor."

"And what am I supposed to do?"

"Come to Roger's Peak with me, sir—and a big search-party," said the little man eagerly. "It's not so far across country."

"Hold it!" growled Basil Williams. "Let me think."

His thoughts gave him no comfort. This unexpected news was the very devil. He

had a very soft spot for Joy. The trouble was, there was no shred of evidence that the girl had been taken to Chalston Park. It might be that she was snatched by any one of Conquest's enemies—and he had plenty.

"Listen, Livingstone," said Mr. Williams, almost plaintively. "How the hell can I go to this cursed peak at such an hour of the night? Where's my authority?"

"The gurnor didn't want no authority!" retorted Manderville, with fine scorn. "Miss Joy's in danger—"

"I know it," snapped the inspector. "But Chalston Manor is a house of death, and there are only servants there, anyway. Look, Chalston's been dead an hour, waiting for to-morrow's funeral. How can I set up to that infernal peak-top building? Who's going to admit me?"

He gave a little start. Impossible to obtain an official search-warrant, sheer madness to go to Roger's Peak and force an entry on his own initiative. But there was somebody who might be able to get him in. Pritchard, the lawyer!

"Come on, Livingstone!" said Mr. Williams gravely.

They were off in two minutes, using the inspector's last squad car. And they drove straight back to London—to the home address of Mr. Amos Pritchard—which the inspector had obtained from Roderick. Mr. Pritchard was in bed, and he did not like being bawled out. He appeared sleepy, hostile, and ill-tempered.

"I hope you have a reasonable explanation for this outrageously late call, Inspector Williams?"

"Reasonable enough, sir," interrupted Mr. Williams grimly. "I want to know what you can tell me about Toowoomba Dick."

The reaction was interesting. The middle-aged lawyer lost his hostility, his lower jaw dropped, and he sank tremblingly into a chair.

"Too-Toowoomba Dick?" he repeated huskily.

"Yes. The late Lord Chalston's black servant."

"I don't understand. Has something happened to him?"

"Something has happened to four other people," said Mr. Williams, more grave than ever. "Three of them are known to be dead—murdered. The fourth—Listen, Mr. Pritchard. I have reason to suspect that Toowoomba Dick is a mass murderer. I haven't an atom of proof, but Conquest doesn't make many mistakes."

"Conquest!" said Mr. Pritchard, with a start. "That name is familiar. What you are saying about Toowoomba Dick is utterly monstrous. The fellow is quite harmless, a kindly, gentle creature. I've known him for years, ever since he was a boy, in fact."

"Three men named Cuffe, Murpheson and Day were stoned when they learned that Lord Chalston had unexpectedly died," continued the inspector deliberately. "Cuffe was murdered within five minutes, and his body was stowed away from the mortuary. Later Murpheson and Day were murdered, and if it hadn't been for Conquest their bodies would have disappeared, too. It's Conquest's theory that these three men were blackmailing the late Lord Chalston, and had been blackmailing him for a large number of years—"

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Pritchard looked very startled.

"Well?"

"I think it's true—yes, very possibly true," said the lawyer tensely. "Lord Chalston's income was more than sufficient to meet all his needs, but it so happens that some months prior to his own in-

heritance of the title and estate, he had discovered a gold-mine in Australia. He sold it outright for a very large fortune. That fortune, over a period of twenty-five years, has dwindled extraordinarily. Lord Chaston got out of hundreds and thousands during these years, and he gradually refused to tell me what he had done with the money."

"Blackmail, as sure as hell!" said the inspector. "Remarkable how Conquest always hits the nail! I'd better tell you, Mr. Pritchard, that the new Lord Chaston has disappeared, and is presumably murdered. The things becoming a nightmare—"

"Good heavens! Toowoomba Dick murdered!"

Mr. Williams looked at him strangely. "I said the new Lord Chaston."

"But Dick is—Oh, yes, I see—I see!" Mr. Pritchard swallowed something. "You mean his late lordship's brother, Mr. Smyth? Disappeared, you say?"

"Conquest went down to Bishop's World to warn him, and he wouldn't listen. I believe this Australian savage is responsible for the whole series of crimes." The inspector looked hard into Mr. Pritchard's eyes. "If you know anything at all about Toowoomba Dick, sir, you'd better tell me."

The lawyer was completely frightened. With his heart practically barking, he was remembering his recent visit to Roger's Peak, and Dick's strange behaviour. Dick's peculiar request that there should be delays. Mr. Pritchard came out with the truth before he could get a curb in his tongue, or remember the ethics of his profession.

"Toowoomba Dick is the new Lord Chaston," he said tremulously. "That's what I can tell you about him, Inspector. The suggestion that he is a murderer is fantastic."

"Calm yourself, sir," said Mr. Williams kindly. "We're talking about a black assassin."

"Dick is the new Lord Chaston, I tell you," insisted Mr. Pritchard. "Good heavens, I shouldn't have told you that. However, the harm is done now, so you might as well hear the whole story. But, remember, inspector, this is in strict confidence." He looked at Livingston uncertainly. "Is this man to be trusted?"

Mr. Williams thought for a minute or two that the unfortunate man had taken leave of his senses. But a blaze of green understanding flooded into his mind after he had heard the strange story of Dick's birth and his mother's family history. He was particularly interested when Mr. Pritchard described Dick as a cultured and intelligent white man with a black skin.

"I don't trust these mixtures, sir."

"But, Inspector, I know the boy," said Mr. Pritchard earnestly. "He's good, he's kind, he's brilliantly clever. He's stunned with grief over the tragic death of his father. In any case, what earthly motive could he have for murdering his Uncle Theodore? Granting that he might be capable of killing three unrepentant black-masters—and I do not admit that for a moment—why should he kill his own uncle? He is in the direct line of descent, and inherits the title and estates. His Uncle Theodore was not in his way at all."

Mr. Williams' brain was abnormally acute.

"In that case, why make these delays?" he countered shrewdly. "Why not instruct you to come out with the truth at once?"

"I confess, I do not quite understand his reasons—"

"And this Uncle Theodore," continued the inspector. "I never met him, but I understand that he is a man—or was—of extraordinary pomposity. He spoke to me for a few minutes over the telephone. You've got to look at the psychology of the matter, sir. Do you think it likely that a man of Mr. Smyth's temperament and character would stand by and see his rightful inheritance taken from him by a black man?"

"But it's not his rightful inheritance."

"I know that, but does Mr. Smyth know it? He's always regarded himself as the next heir, hasn't he? He and the rest of the family would undoubtedly dispute Toowoomba Dick's right to the title."

"Without the slightest hope of success?"

"And Dick? Does he know there'd be no hope of success?" said the inspector sharply. "Not on your life! He knows that his uncle and his cousins might deprive him of his birthright. That's motive enough for murder. I want you to get dressed, Mr. Pritchard, and come with me at once to Chaston Manor."

"In heaven's name, why?"

"Because I believe your precious Dick has killed his uncle and taken the body to Roger's Peak," replied Mr. Williams. "Because I believe that Conquest's partner, Miss Everard, has been taken there, too. You have access to the peak, and I haven't. I can't get a special warrant, but you're Dick's friend, and you can take me up to the peak as your friend. Let's go!"

#### THE LIVING WAXWORK

THERE was a strangely poetic expression on Toowoomba Dick's face as he carried Joy across the spacious lounge at the top of Roger's Peak and laid her on a divan. She was still wrapped in the rug, still bound and helpless.

"One, two, I don't like it!" muttered Dick Cranston, when Dick joined him outside, after locking the door. "You ain't gonna crack the dame, are ya? I've never been fussy, but killing a woman is more than I'll stand for. If you hadn't promised me she wouldn't come to no harm I wouldn't of fetched her."

"Have no fear, my friend," said Dick gently. "The girl will come to no harm whatever. I am very pleased with you. I am going to pay you liberally for what you have done tonight. And there is one other task to be done."

"No, me, pal!" protested the thing. "I'm through for to-night! Smashing that doll has put fifteen years on to my age—and I mean fifteen years!"

But when he saw the bloated size of the bank-roll which Lord Chaston handed to him, he recovered the lost fifteen years in fifteen seconds. He had felt from the start that he was dressing, and now he knew it. There wasn't so much money in all the world.

"And another thousand if you successfully accomplish this additional mission," said Dick persuasively. "There is nothing to fear—now. Conquest is here."

Bizarre workings of Fate! Dick's father had kept enormous sums in cash in the peak-top retreat—as safe there as in any bank vault. There was still a great deal of money left, and Dick was using some of it to pay for the killing of the man who, but for the uncle's sudden death, would have received it as his money. Without this large supply of cash Dick could have bought no help, and without outside help his elaborate murder plans could never have been put into practice. He was paying Tom Cranston with fantastic recklessness—and perhaps a touch of genius! For

Cranston was unquestionably delivering the goods!

The man took his departure at once, his pockets bulging, his brain fevered with thoughts for the future. All his worthless life he had sought easy money without avail—until now. Now it had come in an avalanche.

Dick went through the doorway opposite the lift and took a look at his unconscious prisoner. Norman Conquest was lying prone on the floor, flat on his back. Dick flashed a torchlight and passed a hand in front of the Desperado's eyes, which were open and staring, just as they had been when that dread oblivion had overtaken him. There was no reaction, no sign of life. Never had Norman Conquest so resembled a corpse.

"A little longer, Mr. Conquest—just a little longer!" murmured Dick.

He went out and locked the door. Up in the lounge on the main floor above, he unfasted. Joy's bonds and then stood respectfully away from the girl while she smoothed her rumpled frock and tidied her hair. Joy was pale and deadly calm, and, inwardly, she was frightened. She had had a little gun in her bag, but Cranston had taken the bag away. She had no weapon of any kind.

"Miss Everard, it would be foolish and futile to apologise for the manner in which you were brought here." Dick was sitting on a chair on the other side of the room, and his words came slowly and faintly.

"I saw you for the first time as I was coming out of the chapel. You had been told that I was dumb? But I'm not dumb. Neither am I black! His voice grew slightly firmer. "Indeed, Miss Everard, I'm white, as white as any father."

Joy, surprised by his words, surprised by the beautiful refinement of his voice, and nothing. She had expected things to be so different that she had not yet recovered her balance. Violence—glorious triumph—hideous attack—humiliation. All of these, yes. But not humble apologies and a respectful obedience to the properties.

"I want to assure you now that not a hair of your head is going to be harmed," Dick continued earnestly. "Within the confines of this peak-top apartment you are free to do as you will. Until you give me permission to come near you, I will not even approach. There is wine on the table near your wine and sandwiches. If you feel in the need of a little refreshment, please do not hesitate to help yourself."

Joy, slightly dizzy, felt less frightened. But made no had gone very, very cold.

"If you wish me no harm, why did you get your hired bullies to bring me here so roughly and brutally?"

"No, no, Miss Everard! No hired bullies," protested Dick. "Cranston is but a poor fool, and he is the only man in my employ. He obeys me because I am giving him more money than he ever dreamed of. It cannot last, of course. Very soon I shall have no further need of him. Would you have come of your own accord?" he added teasingly. "This was the only way, and I warned Cranston not to hurt you. Did he hurt you?" Lord Chaston's voice became harsh. "If he hurt you, Miss Everard, I'll punish him as he deserves!"

"I don't understand you," said Joy quietly. "You took a very foolish chance this—"

"You are thinking of your friend, Conquest?" asked Dick, with a little shake of his head. "You must forget him, Miss Everard. I have got Conquest in the room below, and very soon I am going to kill him. Yes, it is the only way. He has got

to die." He spoke simply and earnestly. "He is too dangerous a man to set at liberty."

Joy's coldness increased. Her one hope was shattered. So this vain black devil had succeeded with his one stupid henchman where many a cleverly organized gang had failed! Perhaps that was the very reason for his success.

"If you kill my friend, how can you ever hope to appear as anything but a cold-blooded murderer in my eyes?" asked the girl scornfully. "I thought I was afraid of you, and once I ran in panic when you looked at me. But I'm not afraid now. I can see that you are more to be pitied."

"I don't want you to be afraid of me, Miss Everard," said Dick, springing up, his eyes burning. "That time you ran from me I was hurt—hurt deeply. When I saw you for the first time, I thought I'd never see anything so lovely, so sweet and fresh. I haven't seen many women, Miss Everard. Photographs in the weekly pictorial journals, yes, shadows on the television screen—those too. But I saw you in the flesh, living, breathing, and I prayed, then, that one day you would be Countess of Chalon."

"Countess of Chalon?" repeated Joy wonderingly.

"You don't understand," he cried. "My skin is black, and my face is unimpressive, but I see with the eyes of a white man! He thumped his chest. "Inside I am as white as you! My father gave me his brains and his love of beautiful things."

"Your father?"

"The man who lies dead in the chapel—the man who is to be buried as the family vault is closed."

"Lord Chalon," said Joy, with a sudden flash of enlightenment and new fear. "Your father?"

He told her the story—honestly, passionately, and with such beauty of phrase that she knew he was telling the truth. No true abnormal could possess such a brain as his.

"My father always hoped—always believed—that he would outlive me," he continued. "Can't you understand why he built this strange retreat? He was a good man, kind and gentle and lovable. I was his son, his heir, and it was not in his nature to discard me. He lavished every luxury within his power on me, always dreaming and praying that he would live the longer, so that the family name of Chalon would not be dishonored by the blot he was keeping so secret. While my father lived I could do nothing to hurt him, because he never hurt me. He never told me that he expected to outlive me, but I knew it. It was the only reason why he kept me at the top of this peak and pretended to all that I was his dumb servant. He looked round with tears suddenly flooding into his eyes. "In this lounge father and I had such good times. We were such pals, he and I. I didn't want him to die, Miss Everard. Something turned to ice inside me when he died."

"And you went straight out and—killed!"

"I killed the human culture who had been blackmailing him for over twenty years!" flashed Dick passionately. "They knew the secret of my black skin, and father paid them to keep silent. Year after year he paid them, permitting them to live in luxury. And then father died!" His eyes burned like live coals. "He died because he had been too foolish to call in a doctor! So tragic—so unnecessary! And when I knew that he was dead, I knew that I could punish his enemies."

Joy looked at him with some trace of

compassion, and perhaps a little understanding.

"Those three men, yes," she said. "But Mr. Theodore Smyth, of Hudson's Weekly?"

"Dead," Theodore said. Dick laughed harshly. "That pompous, brainless, bragging fool! Could I allow him to contest my brightness in the law courts and triumph over me? No, Miss Everard!" Dick drew himself up with a strange dignity. "When I proclaim myself Earl of Chalon, there shall be no living man to contest my right to the title!"

He walked swiftly to the door, opened it, and then paused and looked back.

"I shall not be very long, Miss Everard," he said softly. "I beg of you to make yourself entirely at home. The bedroom—through that door—is for your own use. This door, incidentally, is the only exit. Please do not make any scene."

He went out and locked the door—the door! He regarded Joy as just a pitiful, very small, charming, helpless ship of love-lunacy. If he had known her better, he would have led her into the strongest chair with steel wire and coils of heavy chain, complete with padlocks!

Dick had timed his departure cleverly. For Norman Conquest had just recovered full consciousness. Satisfactory in a way, but it was a fat lot of good being conscious while his limbs were bound so tightly that they had lost all feeling, and were incapable of being moved by a fraction of an inch.

Even his head appeared to be fixed in a kind of vice, for he found that he could not turn his head either way. He was lying face upwards on the floor, and he recognised the chamber—for a single electric light was burning near the door—as Toowoombe Dick's private mosque.

Funnily enough, when he tried to turn his eyes, so that he could get a better look round, he discovered that he was unable to do so. Even his eyelids refused to work, for all his efforts to shut his eyes were unavailing.

His eyeballs and his eyelids could not be bound with ropes, so they were obviously some other explanation of his helplessness. The truth came to him just as he was feeling surprised at finding himself alive. Earlier, when he had been passing into oblivion, he had believed that it was his last conscious moment on earth. But Toowoombe Dick had not injected a deadly

poison into his veins! No, not poison, but something which held him paralyzed in body whilst his brain recovered! The bonds which held him as helpless were invisible bonds. And the utter horror of that realization gave the usually carefree Desperado the biggest jolt of his life.

He heard a key turn as the lock, he heard the door open and close. Soft padding footsteps—

"The paralysis affects the muscles only, Conquest, after the first hour or two," said Toowoombe Dick, bending over him. "An uncomfortable sensation, is it not? You won't recover the use of your limbs for another six hours, at least—and then it will be too late."

The words came to Norman's brain with uncanny clarity. It was as though his brain, having rid itself of the effects of the drug, had attained a super-sensitiveness. Which seemed to aggravate the whole diabolical business.

"Yes, I'm quite a chemist," continued Dick softly, as he proceeded to make a few preparations. "A man who spends all his life at home must necessarily have a change of hobbies occasionally. I injected myself with the stuff once, and gave myself quite a fright. I lay paralyzed, but with my brain active, for six hours and thirteen minutes. A very distressing experience, Conquest."

He had donned a curious kind of overall, and he was discoloured and greasy with wax. He drew close-fitting rubber gloves over his hands. Then he wheeled a rubber-tyred trolley, rather like a wheeled stretcher, out of a corner and placed his prisoner upon it.

"Only a brief journey into the next chamber," he explained. "I'm anxious that you should see my workrooms."

Norman felt his helplessness acutely. He thought of a hundred brilliantly witty and scathing things to say to his black-skinned enemy—things which would not have come to his mind ordinarily—but his very vocal apparatus was paralyzed like the rest of him, and he could not utter a sound. A nasty blow for a salubrious fellow of the Desperado's disposition.

He had seen the workrooms before, and he rather wanted to tell Toowoombe Dick so. He saw them again now, standing as he liked on their mounts—Cuffs Murphree and Day, the blackmailers, and Mr. Theodore Smyth and his two sons. Dick

## PAUL CYNOS... cornered!



Paul Cynos, the most dangerous, cold-blooded criminal that has yet threatened law and order, was being held at last. In a few hours he would be on trial for murder . . . and the gallows would wipe out the name of Cynos for ever. But would it? Only Section Black had doubts. Not yet did he dare write The End to this most amazing case of his career—and he was right! For Paul Cynos still had one desperate, deadly card to play. You must read "GUILTY—BUT INSANE!" . . . the extra-long story of the final thrilling round between Blake and his greatest enemy. It's on today's

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whirled his captive to the end stand, which was empty, and placed Norman upright upon it. Norman's muscles felt rigid, and they were rigid, for he stood there unsupported. Except for Dick's hand, the Desperado would have tumbled over like a skittle.

"Yes, you make a very attractive addition to my title collection," said Toowoomba Dick mockingly. "I think I told you once that I should have to add your effigy to my collection, Conquest. I'm going to improve on that, my interfering friend! You will be a flesh-and-blood effigy!"

He laughed softly, lowered Norman to the floor, and then proceeded to remove every stitch of his prisoner's clothing. It was such an unusual proceeding that Norman could hardly guess as to the reason. Knowing what this devil had done to his other victims, however, the Desperado had a shrewd idea that it was going to be something unpleasant.

"I would have killed you quickly and painlessly, Conquest—as I killed my Uncle Theodore this evening," said Dick, as he made some adjustments to an instrument, rather like a Hoover Dustette in shape and size, which was connected to an electrical plug-point. "But you have given me a lot of trouble. You have persistently interfered in my affairs, even to the length of unlawfully entering my property and conducting your spraying in my very home. So I am going to punish you, Conquest."

He turned a switch, and the instrument commenced to buzz. Toowoomba Dick kept feeling a bulbus portion at the rear.

"Making these waxwork figures is another of my hobbies," he continued. "Don't you think they're rather good? I have never been to Madame Tussaud's, but

I doubt if they have anything so lifelike as my little efforts." He looked straight into Norman Conquest's eyes, and his expression became hard and cruel. "Certainly they'll have nothing so lifelike as you—when you are finished!"

He touched a button, and the internal hum of the instrument increased. A fine spray shot out of the nozzle, misty pink. Liquid wax! Wax warmed just sufficiently to make it sprayable. It settled over Norman Conquest as a fine film, and became set in a few minutes. While one part was being sprayed, another was "drying", and as the wax hardened, the limb it covered became identical with a genuine waxwork!

"Do you appreciate the scheme, Conquest?" asked Lord Chablon gleefully. "By the time I have finished—and I shall spray your face as well as your body—every one of your millions of pores will be hermetically sealed. You will stand here, paralysed in body, but conscious in mind. You will slowly suffocate, since the body must breathe through the pores as well as through the mouth. Before you can recover the use of your limbs, you will be dead. And thereafter you will be nothing but a waxwork!"

He finished his terrible task, and it did not take him long to replace Norman Conquest's clothing and to stand him in position at the end of the waxwork line. Finally, he utilised a miniature graver, one which sent out a tiny jet of melted wax, and Norman Conquest's face, too, took on the set rigidity and hair-shirt appearance of the genuine wax figures which stood beside him in that grim and gloomy chamber.

A living waxwork—with hot blood coursing through its veins!

#### STRENGTH THROUGH JOY!

ANY tigers of the jungle could have taken a few tips from Joy Everard as she explored her prison. She found that her black captor had got her well and truly caged. The one door, with its powerful lock, was the only exit. Peering through into the luminous bed-room, she saw that there was no other door. Plenty of windows, yes, but they were high and apparently sealed. They were not even made to open, ventilation being supplied by other methods.

The soul-destroying knowledge that the Killer Earl had gone down to some baseness of fitness to kill Norman Conquest almost sent the girl frantic. It was while she was standing stockstill in the middle of the lounge, thinking unkind things about her slowness, that she heard a soft murmur of voices. She held her breath and listened more intently. Not voices. One voice—Toowoomba Dick's. It seemed to be coming from a great distance. Suddenly Joy dropped full length to the carpet and placed her ear to the floor.

Yes, the voice was coming from somewhere underneath. She experienced a momentary relief. If Dick was talking, it meant that Norman was still alive. She strained her ear to catch a word or two from Norman himself, but there was only one voice. The girl's lips tightened. As nothing short of a gag could ever prevent the Desperado from talking, particularly when he was in a tight corner, he was obviously gagged.

Joy sprang to her feet.

"Thank, fathemed!" she urged herself fiercely. "If you're going to do your part as the noble half of the acts, you're got to get a move on! Norman's in a spot!"

She looked about her tentatively, her vivid little face flushed and eager. The spirit in this slender girl was as big as a mountain,

and even with the odds hopelessly against her she was seeking an avenue whereby she could dash to the help of her partner. She crushed down the agonising conviction that she was too weak and small to defeat Toowoomba Dick single-handed. "What's the good of trying anything?" mocked a little limp of Desperado, not unlike Old Grand himself, who was perched on her shoulder. "Even if you get out of the room—which isn't likely—how are you going to get the better of a devil like Toowoomba Dick? You can't hope to knock him cold."

"Can't never did anything," said Joy's plucky spirit.

"We're hundreds of feet from the ground, perched on the top of a precipitous peak, and—"

"Let me think!" said Joy fiercely. Hundreds of feet from the ground. Her eyes, like the great twin stars, turned to the high window.

"Supposing I were a terrified girl instead of a small chunk of ice!" she asked herself. "A terrified girl, locked in a secret sky-lark, at the mercy of a sex-craved savage! Waiting for the blighter to come back and make his marvellous attack! What would a poor girl do? Jump out of the window, of course! Death before dishonour every time!"

Her eyes fell upon a pair of stout Indian clubs with which Toowoomba Dick presumably exercised. She had already toyed with the thought of grabbing one of them and waiting behind the door. But this new idea was better.

She ran across, seized one of the clubs, and swung it with all her strength through the nearest window. The noise made by the shattering glass was terrific, but it was a mere whisper compared with the shattering scream which wailed into the night and died away into a trailing sob.

In the chamber below Lord Chablon froze.

"The girl!" he whispered stupidly. "What has she done?"

He jumped to the one glaring conclusion. A smashing of window glass, a scream of awful terror! The girl had thrown herself out of one of the windows! Finding herself trapped, finding the door locked and the windows unobtainable, she had opened, she had hurled herself bodily to her death. Dick could almost picture her slight form falling sheer down the peak, to land in a crushed and mangled heap at the bottom.

Norman Conquest, who heard the crash of glass and the scream just as clearly, was only sickened for a split-second. Then his heart turned a somersault. Joy clutch herself to certain death? Not likely! It was the first indication he had had that she was on the premises, but there was no mistaking the beautiful power of that scream. The conclusion came over Norman like a deluge that Joy was doing her stuff.

Toowoomba Dick, having only a sketchy knowledge of her valiant character, did not give himself time to think at all. He just dashed for the door, wrenched it open, and went tearing up the stairs to the lounge. Every trace of malignant savagery had gone from his face, and his expression was one of child-like apprehension. His hand shook as he turned the key in the lock. Fearful, nervous, he threw open the door.

The lounge was empty; one of the big windows opposite was completely missing except for a few jagged fragments, and the night wind was blowing directly across the room. What Dick could not see was the valiant little figure of Joy standing behind the opened door with the second

## THE BOOK OF THE BRITISH AIR ARMY!



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Indian club poised with businesslike precision.

"She's gone—gone!" croaked the unhappy man, stumbling forward.

(Crash!)

"Nice work! A direct hit! Dick did a bit more stumbling after the Indian club had bopped him well and truly on the back of the head. Like a flash of lightning, with a soft swish of skirts, Joy was round the door and outside. Slam! The door was closed and locked. Breathless, she fairly hurried herself down the stairs.

"Norman!" she cried urgently.

The absolute silence about her unnerved her. She wondered how long it would be before Toowoomba Dick recovered from the effects of that blow. He would not be gentle. It would not take him long to smash the door open.

Joy was in the lobby against the lift. Opposite the lift a door stood ajar. She ran in and then checked. A little slipshaver ran shuddering through her slim body. She knew, without looking into the shadowy corners of the place, that she was in the presence of Death. There was another door, also half open, and in the chamber beyond there was a light.

She ran in quickly. There a tiny screen, half rolled, arose in her throat as she checked again. Suddenly confronted with the motionless waxwork figure, the girl experienced one of the greatest shocks of her life. For one dreadful instant she thought that the waxworks were real men.

Then she remembered. Norman had told her something about Dick's private waxworks. Her heart faltered as she recognized the last figure of the row. So the mad Lord Chabston—she was convinced he was mad—had already made the effort to the Despondent. So this—so terrifyingly real. She wrenched her gaze away and looked into the shadowy places of the chamber, searching for the real Norman. If only the light had been stronger! If only she had an electric torch—

Drawn as though by some irresistible magnetism, she turned once again to the effigy of Norman. She could not take her eyes off it. She went closer, fighting a desire to turn on her heels and run. It was something about the figure's eyes— She caught her breath painfully. These eyes were not glass. They were not the dead eyes of a waxwork. They were alive! They looked into hers with intelligence and urgency.

"Norman!" cried Joy chockingly.

Vaguely she understood—and yet she did not understand at all. The supposed waxwork figure was Norman Conquest himself, his body coated with a thin film of wax. It was the suit which gave the girl her first definite clue. It was Norman's own suit, and one she had particularly liked. And his eyes—

She seized one of his waxen hands and squeezed the fingers. Little flakes of wax filed her palm, and she felt warm flesh beneath! Shocked with horror, yet as game as a miniature reformer of Boadicea, she decided upon action. The one thing to do, the only thing to do, was to get Norman out of this jam—to get him as far away from Roger's Peak as possible.

Her quick eyes fell upon the wheeler stretcher. It took her just twenty-five seconds to lower her helpless partner on to the trolley, and while she was doing so her ears were filled with a dull thrumming from somewhere above. No mistaking the significance of such sounds. Dick had recovered, and was battering the heavy door to pieces!

Was there time to get out?

Forcing himself to remain calm, she seized the stretcher and wheeled it past the line of waxwork figures, out into the other cellar-like room, with its low ceiling, and then through the exit door and so to the lobby. By now the very air was vibrating with the crashing sounds of splintering wood. Deceptive sounds. The door, under Lord Chabston's frantic attack, was quite unharmed except for a little breaking away against the lock.

There was a alarming crash as the door flew open. Dick appeared an incendiary cry of triumph and hurried himself bodily down the short staircase.

Joy, silently praying, had just made the lift.

She saw Lord Chabston's flying figure as he came into view, and knew the narrowness of the margin by which she had escaped with the black killer's latest victim. For she had escaped! Her finger was on the control button.

As Dick leaped for the elevator, it moved. It sank swiftly on its downward journey before he could reach it. Joy leaned against the wall of the lift trembling from head to foot, her brain busy. Dick could do nothing for some minutes, but all the same the girl was sickened. She would have time to push the stretcher down the subway tunnel and out into the open air while the lift was going up and down again. But then that black-skinned maniac would come streaking out, and he was more like an animal than a human being. The darkness wouldn't help her. He would smell which direction she had taken, and follow. No good hiding in the bushes, either.

The lift perceptibly slowed, and a moment later jolted to a standstill. Joy grasped the trolley and wheeled it out. She did not look back, but she knew that the little elevator had started on its upward journey before she had taken a couple of steps. Straining and panting, she made for the exit.

For Norman, the ordeal was the most distressing of his career. He felt his helplessness acutely. How much better if he had been unconscious! But to see young Pixie working like this, to hear her hard breathing, was an agony. And the knowledge that he could do nothing whatever to help her filled his soul with guilt. What a game little pal she was! What glorious evidence she was giving that if he came under the partnership didn't! His heart was choking.

They were at the exit door of the cliff. Somewhat Joy got it open. She knew that Dick would come running out within a matter of seconds. And then she heard voices! Voices and swiftly running feet! Without quite knowing why she did so, she pushed the trolley straight through into a dense clump of bushes on the other side of the pathway, and crouched down and ceased to breathe.

It was with sickening relief that she recognized one of the voices. Inspector Williams! Then another voice, Mandeville Livingstone! Good old Mandeville—dear old Mandy! She prepared to break out of cover, to secure their help—

And Toowoomba Dick emerged from the cliff doorway.

It was a hot moment. A moment fraught with high voltage electricity. Mr. Williams, with Mr. Fitzhatchard by his side, jerked to a standstill. Lord Chabston looked at them with inward alarm, but with outward stolidity.

"Dick, my dear fellow!" said Mr. Fitzhatchard breathlessly. "We heard a crash

of glass a few minutes ago, and we hurried— What was it?"

Dick's thoughts were rapid. He knew that Joy had tricked him by throwing something through the window and shattering it. His eyes, as keen as those of a lynx, searched quickly. He moved forward and poked up the Indian club which had fallen near the edge of the path. By now Inspector Williams had got a powerful torchlight going, and was splashing its light upon the black man who was believed, by all at Chabston Manor, to be a dumb servant. Dick was a fine actor. He looked calm, and slightly bewildered, and was complete master of himself.

He shrugged—and swung the Indian club with expert skill.

Mr. Fitzhatchard hesitated. It was in his mind to tell Dick that the two men with him knew the real secret. But if everything was all right at Roger's Peak—as the lawyer firmly believed in his own secret mind—it would not be fair to the boy. Better to let him think that these visitors were unaware of his real status.

"You mean you threw that stick through the window?" asked Mr. Fitzhatchard. "What on earth for?"

Dick smiled and made signs.

"Oh! It slipped out of your hand while you were exercising?"

Dick nodded.

"I see! And it went through the window and fell on to the path." Mr. Fitzhatchard looked at the inspector. "Just an accident, you see."

"Mind if I go up to the late Lord Chabston's sky retreat and have a look round?" interrupted Mr. Williams politely. "Not a very suitable hour, I know, but now that we are here—"

"Of course! Of course!" said the lawyer. "Dick won't have any objection, will you, Dick?" He turned to the black-skinned earl. "My friend, Mr. Williams, has a strange idea that the peak-top house isn't safe. Mr. Williams is a surveyor." Mr. Fitzhatchard lied feebly. "He says he frequently warned your late master of the dangers, but his lordship took no notice."

Dick's eyes burned queerly, but he showed his teeth in a calm smile and stood aside, inviting them to enter. Inspector Williams experienced a slight feeling of uneasiness. This black fellow looked singularly harmless and even stolid, and there was nothing suspicious in his manner.

"You stay down here, Livingstone," he grunted, turning to the ex-camp. "We shan't be long."

They went in, and the door closed.

"Lo! love me!" breathed Mandeville. "Looks like I've made a four-leafed clover. Wow!"

He jumped six inches into the air and uttered a squeak of startled fright. Nethering himself to be alone, he had not been prepared for the slim white hand which came apparently out of nowhere and gripped hold of his arm.

"Hold it, Mandy!" came an urgent whisper. "It's only me!"

"Miss Joy!" gasped the little man.

She dragged him into the bushes.

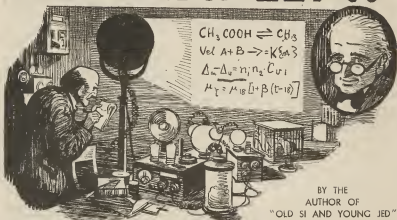
"This is what I call super-service," said the girl softly. "The one thing I wanted in all this world was somebody to help me—and here you are on the spot, Mandy! The third member of the Old Firm! Take a look here!"

Livingstone looked—and gulped.

"The gurner!" he breathed. "Then—then it was right! You and the gurner was on a hot spot, wasn't?"

"The only hotter spot I can think of is (Continued on back page.)

# The BRAIN!



BY THE  
AUTHOR OF  
"OLD SI AND YOUNG JED"

## JUST TO REMIND YOU

PROFESSOR OSCAR PROBYN was one of the cleverest scientists of his day, not only one brain greater than his, but the brain of his brother, PROFESSOR BORIS PROBYN, who lived the life of a hermit in a house in Kankham. In his youth, Boris Probyn had liked a girl and had expected to marry her, but she had later married, and so he had devoted himself to his daughter, FEMILENE, who, that day, was about to get married to Boris Probyn. When trouble came to Professor Boris Probyn, he came to help her. But strange things happened before that could begin.

One day, a young man, named BARNISTER BRANDT, who worked for Oscar Probyn, came to the house of Boris Probyn and the power and wealth it would bring. He predicted the means of having a brain alive and functioning after the body was dead.

There were also others who were anxious to obtain Boris Probyn's scientific secrets. MARTHA, Oscar Probyn's former maid-servant, was actually a spy selling for the Japanese Government, and with her lover, EARL, planned to steal certain inventions and ideas from Probyn. They were too late, however. They found the body of Boris Probyn, but his brain had been stolen.

Femilene visited the end of GEORGE HARRIS to take the mystery of Boris Probyn's disappearance. Meanwhile, Brandt forced the stolen brain to divulge certain scientific secrets to him. He tried to tell them to the Japanese Embassy, but he was killed by Boris Probyn. But Earl was there, and he knew that Boris Probyn was dead. To test Brandt he is asked to produce certain evidence that only Boris Probyn could have done. Brandt tried to obtain them, but failed.

Brandt and Femilene traced Brandt to an old, deserted chapel. Harris climbed into the building by way of the bell tower.

(Now read on.)

## INSIDE THE CHAPEL

IT didn't cost George much effort to reach the roof of the chapel, nor to edge his way along the roof, reach out and grasp that rather absurd little bell. He slid himself steady, after a little acrobatic glissade on Penny. He was poised in a narrow, dark, incredibly dirty space, with a large and rusty bell close against his face. Above him, hanging from the beams,

he saw something like dirty and discolored wash-leathers, and he realized that these were bats, and felt a faint surprise to discover that real bellfries have real bats.

Below him was nothing. Just the bell-tower, descending into obscurity, seeming to narrow down its long length. The rope to the single bell dangled down the middle, and there was nothing else, save some traces of where there had been a ladder, which had rotted away and fallen.

George realized that he couldn't climb down the sheer wall. He either had to trust himself to the bell-rope or turn back. He took hold of the rope, and it seemed strong enough.

"Lord, 'elp us!" he muttered.

He didn't realize that he had offered up a prayer. He took hold of the bell-rope, swung himself out on it and proceeded to descend. He thought at first the rope was giving and it was all up. Actually, the big wheel above the bell turned, and the bell swung, and came to the end of its freedom of movement with a solemn dong. George slid rapidly down the rope, and at last found dusty ground beneath his feet. He let go the rope very cautiously and slowly. He didn't want the bell to ring out again.

"Now for 'it!"

He explored the chapel by the feeble light that filtered through the boarded windows, and he found nothing but dirt and decay. In a little room behind where the altar should have been he actually found a clergyman's discarded and rotting gown, thick with dust, and he was shocked when his foot clanked against some bottles which had obviously contained beer. It didn't occur to George that

the bottles had been brought in by the workmen who had boarded up the windows.

But it looked as though he'd come here on a wild-goose chase. Why, he asked himself, should Barnister Brandt come in secret to this bare and neglected place?

George's search became more intense. Perhaps his eyes had grown more accustomed to the dim light. He found the trapdoor, the small iron rung to raise it by. George was impatient for action now. He stooped, raised the trapdoor. A wave of miasma beat out him.

"Strewth!" he whispered. "This chapel seems to have kept its own private entrance to hell."

George saw steps receding into darkness. He cursed his own incompetence as a detective, because he hadn't even remembered to bring a flash-lamp. However, he went boldly down the steps, stood unceremoniously at the bottom, and considered whether he ought to go back for a light.

The question was resolved for him. A switch clicked, the room was flooded with blinding light from a naked bulb. George saw that it was bare and whitewashed, but there was another ceiling beyond, and standing in the door of the cellar was a small, blond, faintly questioning Japanese.

"What's going on round here?" George blustered.

Mitsuko—for it was Mitsuko!—had been shaken. He'd been basking up the stove, maintaining the force heat that was necessary to keep the brain alive, and the scrape of his shoel had silenced the single stroke on the bell, the sounds of George moving about. Mitsuko had been about to leave when he came on this surly

# This story is written by WALTER TYRER.

## ... There is no one living who can write a more dramatic story, full of unexpected twists and surprises, with characters who live and breathe

### -NOT THE SECOND EDGAR WALLACE... THE FIRST WALTER TYRER

and square-jawed young man at the foot of the steps.

"Fardon," said Miroski, "but have perfect right to ask respectfully same question. What for you pay high honour of visit, young sir?"

His calm smiled George. He realised that his own position was anomalous. But then he remembered that he was no longer merely George Harris, just another young man in a sports coat and flannel trousers and no hat. He represented the guerrilla troops of the law.

"I'm a detective," he said.

It is impossible to say that the wooden face of Miroski looked uneasy. Perhaps the ghost shifted a little, but that was all. He bowed.

"Regret exceedingly impeding in any way activities of officer of the law, but am not concerned of you, as should be thrown into violent state of terror at sight of warrant-card which, no doubt, is about to be produced."

George was a little shaken, but the excessive politeness of Miroski intensified his suspicions.

"I am a private detective," he said. "I've a perfect right to know what you are doing down in this place, that's supposed to be all locked up and abandoned. Another thing—why have you got it so damned hot?"

He mopped his brow, nodded towards the other room.

"What's going on in there?" he demanded.

He strode forward and Miroski backed before him, because George was about twice the size of the Japanese. Also, the feeling that he'd been made game of had put George in a nasty mood. He elbowed Miroski aside and strode into the other room. Here the heat was even more intense; it met him like something solid flung at him; it made him gasp. The stove was almost red-hot. Its moon windows glowing, and there didn't seem a vestige of air in the place. George swung round fiercely.

"What are you doing here? Have I got to bring the police to find out?"

Miroski was bland, silver-voiced, friendly.

"Not necessary to disturb police officer," he said. "Merely wish to explain to polite visitor, but did not desire to interrupt. This chapel now property of little group of my own people, who wish to prepare for their own use. They have humble desire to worship in their own way. Japanese, of course, very ignorant, not like British citizens of mighty Empire. Do not appreciate English worship, where our men makes talk while others sleep. Have therefore bought this chapel and appointed humble self to prepare for worship of Buddha."

George was shaken. This infernal Japanese seemed very smooth and assured, as though he had nothing to hide.

"But—but why the best—the stove?" Miroski bowed, smiled regretfully.

"Would give humble aid much pleasure to instruct kindly, inquiring English devotee in the worship of Buddha, and the attainment of Nirvana, but it is necessary to have head shaved and study for seven years to attain first degree of knowledge. Can only say briefly that certain acts of purification of priest are necessary, for which fire is necessary."

It might be true. But George remembered Bonmaster Brandt. He'd seen Bonmaster Brandt let himself into this chapel with a key. What had Bonmaster Brandt got to do with an obscure little group of Japanese exiles who wanted to worship in their own way? George's eyes flickered round, he looked to the far end of the cellar, where an alcove was in shadow. There was something there; something that twitched all the time, something dead and yet alive, that lived in a glass jar!

"What's that?"

George's direct methods had the quality of the unexpected for Miroski. Now George strode abruptly across the room and bent forward. He saw something grey and horrible that lived in legend in a glass jar, that pulsed rhythmically all the time. He saw, although he did not know it, the Brain!

He had a strange choking feeling in his throat. His eyes smouldered, and his heartbeats had quickened. This heat, he thought, had got him now. But that wouldn't account for this strange feeling of sickness and infinite pity that swept over him as he peered in the shadow of the faintly pulsing something in the jar.

"What the devil's that?"

He bent forward. And then, tripping in his brain, he heard something. But he didn't hear it, not with his ears. Suddenly the whole sentence was there, right in the middle of his forehead, although there was no sound save the faint drip, drip from the tap above the Brain.

"You are about to be struck over the head from behind!"

The message was as clear as though it had been shouted. George Harris had no notion how the thought-waves of a dead man had impinged on his own brain-cells and buried that message into his head. But he took the warning and turned. And the lead pipe that Miroski swung down viciously crossed his head by a hair's-breadth and descended with sickening force on his shoulder.

The pain was numbing; George felt he could have dropped in his tracks; and if he had, it would have been all up with him, for Miroski would have battered his head in very effectively if he had had his weapons on the down. But instead he helped George, so much, rather than thought—George's thought, anyway. He had taken the blow on his left shoulder. It was his right fist that came round in something between a hook and an uppercut, and took the Jap under the chin.

A good blow, but too near the chin to be numbing. It sent Miroski teetering back against the opposite wall with such force that he gasped, and for the moment his salt eyes widened.

And then he came in. Came charging in like a stone out of a catapult, and he seemed to have eight different limbs, all pliable in every direction, all turning themselves all over. George felt his head jerked back until he thought his neck would break, while one of his arms was twisted pitifully up behind him—the arm attached to the numbed shoulder, too. But it was numbed now. Fashes of pain shot through it as though red-hot needles were being scientifically driven between the joints.

"Thus," thought George, "is Jai-jutsu."

George had one of those unfidy minds that collect masses of wrong information. It wasn't actually Jai-jutsu. It was something much more elegant called judo, and Miroski was within three inches of snapping a joint of George's spine.

George saw Miroski's fat and yellow face within three inches of his own. He wondered why he had ever thought the Japanese expressionless. He wasn't expressionless now. His eyes had the red light of murder in them, his lips were drawn back from his teeth. George found he could do nothing with his fat, so he drove his elbow hard against Miroski's nose.

The Jap gasped, but he broke the hold he had. George went after him, drove one fist into his stern stomach, another on his throat. And then Miroski kicked, with the grace and speed of a ballet dancer, but the effect was less beautiful.

George gulped, went back suddenly, flat against the wall. The shot against him rocked, the jar on it danced about. Almost, but not quite, the Brain was brought crashing to the floor—the weakly pulsating brain of Boris Probyn. But George had forgotten everything but the lust to take the Japanese apart. He went back into it with a bull's rush. And this time Miroski was ready.

He took hold of George by one wrist, cupped his other hand under George's charging knee. Miroski yielded. It was George's own rush that carried him into mid-air, poised like an acrobat on the Jap's two hands. Miroski only accelerated the process. He threw George crashing into the wall behind him. There was a click, as George's head struck white-washed wall. Then George was just a crumpled and unconscious mass on the flagged floor.

#### THE CAPTURE OF BRANDT.

**B**ONMASTER BRANDT was furtive and uneasy. He had been in the Moldavian Embassy more than half an hour, and so far no one had approached him in the waiting-room. Once or twice he had the eerie sensation that eyes were watching him, but when he twitched round, the massive door was closed. But these tapestries could hide all sorts of eyes: he wouldn't detect a watching eye in the paneling, or in the moulded ceiling.

Brandt pored up and down, his hands clasped behind him. He stunted, misshapen figure served as a crash motor, or a torii, his big head sunk between his shoulders. One of his long, yellow teeth gnawed at his thin lip.

"The fools have got to finance me!" he muttered. "They must!"

For the tenth time he brought out the sheet of paper he had brought to bargain with—the calculations of Boris Probyn, unfinished.



down the stairs to see if Mr. Waddington was coming, and she'd been here fretting herself for more than twenty minutes, and Mr. Waddington wasn't back.

She peered through the letter-box. She could see a corner of a dusty coat, an ankle that she knew was dry.

Fenny saw something at her feet, caught under the door. It was a newspaper, a single sheet of the smaller-page size reserved for racing editions and Salvation Army publications. Fenny stopped and picked it up.

It was to-day's date. "Racing at Sandown Park," it said. The runners had been marked in pencil. One had even been ringed round, and a line drawn out to the margin, where a neat hand had pencilled three words. "Edmund Waddington's Nap!" It was written.

Fenny tore the paper down, and in a fit of temper she tore the envelope down from the door and flung it down and stamped on it. It was a lie, a blatant lie. Mr. Waddington wouldn't be back in five minutes. He wouldn't be back at all. He'd gone racing.

Fenny looked wildly about her. She'd never recalled before what a shabby set of offices it was, with the paper peeling off the walls, and the office that shared this landing empty. Once, some faded lettering announced, it had housed the International Sales Federation, but not now. There was no one but Fenny Wase, and Fenny felt very small, very afraid.

She hadn't realized how she'd come to depend on George Harms—insurance, somewhat unoriginal George. And now he'd put himself in danger and she couldn't help him. She'd no one to turn to!

The police? He'd warned her against that. He'd broken the law himself, forcing his way into that chapel. She wouldn't get the police to believe her story, with nothing to go on but her belief that an old man wouldn't break his word to a girl. Even Oscar Probyn hadn't believed her instinct that something had happened to his brother Boris. But he was in Brandt's hands—cunning, smooth-tongued Brandt. Brandt had fooled him somehow, the old innocent.

But perhaps Oscar Probyn would help her now. He'd been kind; he'd wanted to help her, he'd offered her money. He'd begged her to turn to him if she was faced by anything too big for her. Well, she was faced with something too big for her now. She'd go to Oscar Probyn.

She caught a bus down to the big works, and she sat on the front seat at the top, in a fever of impatience at every traffic jam, sitting on the edge of her seat, trying to urge the bus along. And then there was a deaf and pompous doorkeeper, who tried to keep her out of the works, tried to stop her reaching the laboratory and Oscar Probyn; but her persistence carried her through.

But then she was held up again at the laboratory. A stern-faced man in uniform said so strangely were allowed inside. Fenny looked wildly round, and it seemed Providence that made her see the professor's black car, with Pringle sitting reading behind the wheel.

She darted across to him, caught him by the arm and shook him.

"The professor!" she gasped. "I want to see the professor! Tell this man to let me in!"

Pringle blinked, and then recognition dawned in his eyes. He put away the little book on business correspondence he had been studying.

"What is it, re?" he asked her coldly.

Fenny looked round despairingly, and then she cried out, for Oscar Probyn was standing on the steps of the laboratory, blinking in the weak sunshine. The commishant had tendered him his umbrella and his brief-case, and now offered him his hat. The professor held his brief-case in one hand, his umbrella in the other, and contemplated the hat hopefully. He let go of everything when Fenny ran to him and cried out.

"Professor Probyn! I know you'll help me!"

She poured it all out to him, incoherent, stammering, and the professor listened attentively and patiently. He nodded his white head from time to time.

"I quite understand," he said. "This young man of yours is somewhere in that chapel, and you want me to come and get him out? You hear that, Pringle? We've got to go and find this young man. Miss Wase will tell you where to go."

Pringle opened his mouth to protest, changed his mind, closed his mouth again. He gathered up the professor's belongings, draped them on him in approximately the right places. The professor held the car door open for Fenny, and she was gasping as she fell back on the upholstery. She hadn't realized how exhausted she was. But it would be all right now. Professor Probyn would help her. Other people might find him bumbling and absent-minded, but she knew him as a good friend who never failed. It was the little things he forgot; it was the things that mattered, Oscar Probyn could be keen-trained and decisive.

They stepped from the car, contemplated the battered chapel, with the torn remnants of old posters flapping on the front. It looked somehow fantastic, like some formerly respectable old lady who had

acquired a taste for stout and stuff into in life.

"Seems to me the door's locked, sir," Pringle said importantly.

"Naturally," the professor said. "Break it in, Pringle."

Pringle gulped, looked wildly round for help against this lunacy, but help there was none. He peered to the car and brought out the jack-handle. The chapel door was secured with a bar across and a padlock. When the iron jack-handle was inserted in the loop of the padlock something had to go. It was the padlock. The bar swung down. The door opened.

The three of them moved forward into dusk and gloom. There was something cold and still about the place, shabby and neglected, it might look outside, but in here it was a place for evil deeds. None of them wanted to press forward; they moved up the side by side, peering through the dusk.

So they came to the foot of the tower. There was a heap of dirt and rubbish there. And something else!

"There's something!" gasped Fenny.

Pringle found a match. The scraping of it sounded as loud as thunder. The flame flickered up, and then the dark shape in front of them was revealed for what it was. They saw George Harms, unconscious. Or dead? Fenny's heart questioned fearfully. He was gagged and bound, tied in a sitting position. And bound up with his back to him, so that they squatted each facing a different way, was a dead Chinaman.

*(Oscar Probyn is close to the truth—very near to the Death of Boris Probyn. Will he discover it, or let Miss Wase guard against such a disaster? Don't miss next week's instalment of this amazing story.)*



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# RIVER OF DEATH

**A POWERFUL STORY  
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**By  
MAXWELL GRANT**



## THE STORY SO FAR

"DAVEY JONES" was the name by which the man who controlled the biggest gang of river pirates was known. His lieutenant, named FINE, took a fancy to read a tale in London.

LAMONT CRANSTON, otherwise known as THE SHADOW, the world's cleverest crime fighter, got on the trail. Close he picked up a mystery of EDITH TURNER, who was opposed to RUDY HOLLISTER, a shipping broker. Cranston, learning that Edith Turner's father, who ran a private show on a boat named BLUE CHIP DEEGAN, decided to investigate at the Turner's home. There he discovered a mysterious correspondence between Fink and Ned Turner. Fink brought Turner a book that had on the flyleaf the address of JOHN BROOKE, a bookkeeper. As Fink could not read, this seemed curious and worthy of further inquiry.

ANTHONY SAXON, a theatrical producer, called at Broke's house. Broke went to a secret room, and there Turner met him and handed him a false book inside which were stolen jewels. But Davey Jones himself, in an elaborate disguise, arrived on the scene, knocked Broke down, and escaped with the jewels. Deegan and FLIP WILEY, a girl dancer, were implicated in the case.

Cranston visited The Floating Palace, Turner's river cabaret, and learned what had happened to Broke's.

(Now read on.)

## A DANGEROUS WOMAN.

FLIP WILEY eyed herself in the tall dressing-room mirror with complacent satisfaction.

Flip's creamy skin had been tinted a pale sea-green hue. There was seaweed tangled in her golden hair.

The costume that Flip wore was a daring one. A girdle of diamond beads, strung on silver chains, tinkled musically when she moved before the mirror.

A green fishtail, blazing with imitation emeralds, concealed her limbs. A clever opening in it permitted her to walk without disclosing her shapely bare feet.

Turning from the mirror, Flip swung silently into a brief posture dance. She looked like a mermaid undulating gracefully across the sunken bed of an ocean.

A cautious rap on the door of her dressing-room halted her brief dance. She straightened rigidly. Her eyes vowed towards the locked door.

She dared not refuse to answer the summons. Picking up a silken dressing gown, she clutched its folds hastily together over her slinky costume. She unlocked the door and a man glided quietly and swiftly inside.

It was Roy Hollister. He handed Flip Wiley a package of banknotes.

"That makes it two hundred and fifty," he whispered. "The two hundred is what I already owe you for past performances. The extra fifty is a bonus for the tip that enabled me to make arrangements for the Silver Knave."

"Fair enough," Flip said softly. "I'm a gal who always needs dough. You're the sort of guy it's a pleasure to work for."

She laid a caressing hand on Hollister's as she glided past him towards a cabinet where she locked the money up in a drawer.

"You better be careful about coming to see me," she bewailed. "Blue Chip has been acting queer lately. I think he suspects I'm having dealings with you."

"It's just a business relationship," Hollister muttered. "Deegan knows I'm interested in Edith Turner."

"He might wonder, all the same."

Again she swung close to Hollister. This time there was no doubt of her feelings about him. For an instant Hollister held her in a quick, passionate embrace. But his smile was stronger than his emotion. He released her awkwardly and stepped back.

Someone was tapping gently on the locked cabin door.

In the silence, Blue Chip Deegan's suspicious voice was duly audible outside.

"What's the idea of the big delay, Flip? Open up! I'm in a hurry!"

"Just a second," she called quickly. "I'm getting ready for my act. Wait'll I find my robe."

She showed Hollister a curtained exit that led to the stage. Hollister nodded, and vanished discreetly.

Deegan was seething with rage when he was finally admitted.

"You had a man in here with you! Who was he?"

"You're crazy, darling!" "Don't be to me! I heard him whispering."

Flip's nimble brain groped desperately for a convincing alibi. But fate pulled her out of her dangerous spot. There were sudden footsteps on the stage beyond the curtained exit. A man strode steadily into the dressing-room.

"Listen, Flip. About that change in the dance I suggested. I think— Oh, hello, Deegan!"

The man was Anthony Saxon, the theatrical producer.

"Were you in here a minute ago, talking to Flip?" Deegan growled.

Flip had dropped back a step or two. Her face was behind the shoulder of the angry gambler. She nodded a deprecating and silent "yes" to the peevish producer.

Saxon took the cue. He nodded promptly.

"Yes, I was in here. We were talking

about a change in Flip's dance routine. What about it?"

"Nothing," Deegan said. "I just wanted it."

Saxon sensed danger. He could see that Flip was terrified under the mask of her gay smile. He took her by the arm.

"Come out on the stage, and I'll show you what I mean, Flip. In that first scene where you ran slowly out of that big oyster shell and turn to face the audience—"

Deegan made no effort to stop them as they vanished through the curtained exit. His cool eyes veered about him, frowns as they noticed that the draped cover of a sofa seemed to be slightly disarranged.

Deegan dropped to his knees and lifted the cover. Hidden beneath the sofa he found a man's hat which Flip had kicked swiftly out of sight. Deegan's laughter was barely audible as he noticed the initials in the awningband.

"R. H.," he muttered under his breath. "Roy Hollister, damn it!"

He placed the hat carefully back where he had found it. He didn't want Flip to realize that her scheme to hoodwink him had failed.

Working with slow, methodical care, Cranston inched himself higher and higher on the showboat's tail anchor chain.

He was aware that a pirate raid was planned for to-night by the same thugs who had boarded the Equator. The name of the new steamship to be victimized was the Silver Knave.

The Shadow intended to foil that raid and capture the conspirators. He planned to get quietly ashore from the showboat and notify Joe Cartan.

Fast, however, was moving swiftly to discount his prudent intent.

He had reached the narrow wooden ledge that ran lengthwise along the black hull of the showboat.

Farther asternships, considerably closer to the stern of the showboat, was an open porthole through which light poured. The Shadow's feet were numb by the time he reached his new goal. But his eyes, lying beneath the open porthole, gave him a swift vision inside.

The room was empty.

In another moment the Shadow began to squirm head foremost through the opening. The portholes on the old brigantine had been enlarged to permit added ventilation to the interior of the ship. Except for that his task would have been impossible.

Once inside he realized that he was in Flip Wiley's dressing-room. He began to glide towards the door that led to the corridor.

He was passing a deep closet when his white plan changed again. From the curtained doorway of the stage, the Shadow heard voices. Flip was returning swiftly to her dressing-room, accompanied by a man.

Their appearance out off the Shadow from the corridor. He vanished into the closet, hid there behind hanging garments.

By this time Flip appeared in the room, followed by Anthony Saxon. Saxon's voice was friendly, yet grim.





